THE

MILESIAN CHIEF.

A Romance.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF MONTORIO,

AND

THE WILD IRISH BOY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE MILESIAN.

CHAP. I.

But still I tried each fickle art,
  Importunate and vain,
And while his passion touch'd my heart,
  I triumph'd in his pain.

GOLDSMITH.

THE next morning she timidly mentioned to Desmond an interesting female she had seen the preceding evening, and requested him to learn from his brother who she was; but all the little art Roine was mistress of could not conceal from Desmond that there was another lover, and a deeper interest in the inquiry than she avowed.

Desmond eagerly set out in pursuit of Connal. He found him stretched on the rock where he first beheld Armida. Desmond threw himself beside him, and when he saw the deep melancholy that shaded his brother's face, he almost reproached himself for the thoughts with which he had sought him. He hesitated, changed his posture, and at length forced himself to say.

"You can enjoy solitude, Connal, it supplies you with so many delicious images."

"Are the images that visit my solitude delicious?" said Connal, raising his eyes to his brother.

"Oh, yes, for solitude is so congenial to the thoughts of love."

"I am glad to see you in such spirits, my dear Desmond," said his brother, while his melancholy smile shewed he was far from partaking them.

"Oh, nothing in the world gives such comfort to a young graceless sinner like

me, as to find out a few comfortable, consoling infirmities in a character that has hitherto hung before you like a very scare-crow of morality; and terrified you out of all imitation, and your senses beside."

"No man has more imperfections," said Connal, mildly; "but from which of them do you draw all this consolation?"

"Oh, my dear Connal," said Desmond, eagerly, "do not attempt to deny it; I know it all; I have been at the cabin, and seen the girl and kissed the baby, the little darling, and felt how delightful it was to be even an uncle to such an angel. No one could see its beautiful black eyes and not know whose they were. I know it all you see: the very girl you used to torment me about two years ago. How little did I guess your motive was to keep her to yourself."

"For Heaven's sake, Desmond, what is the meaning of all this?"

"Why only that you, like a wise Mentor, sent your Telemachus on his travels alone, and kept the Calypso to yourself—you hypocrite!"

"I know to whom you allude," said Connal, his features all glowing with the radiant shame of virtue; "and on surmises so weak, you pronounced your brother a libertine. Desmond, your brother would have defied the whole world in your cause, before he would have believed it of you."

"Facts, facts," cried Desmond, already blushing with conviction: "this is mere declamation."

"Then you shall have facts," answered Connal, and he circumstantially related the story of the unhappy woman to Desmond, whose heart, during the narrative, alternately burned with admiration of his brother, and with abhorrence of a very opposite character.

"I will fly," he exclaimed at the conclusion; "I will fly this moment to the castle and repeat the whole story."

"Never," cried Connal, grasping him with his strong arm; "never: the circumstances I have related never must reach the castle through my means: my only wish is to be forgotten there, or at least not remembered as one who employed the secrets of the family to assassinate its peace."

"By heaven, Connal," cried his impetuous brother, "you are enough to drive one mad, with this obstinate stupidity of honour. Here, when I came express from——"

The very feeling he was reproving checked him now, for he felt the impropriety of thus committing the character of Armida, whose name had not been mentioned to him, and he added more calmly:—

"How can you tell the good fortune that may be the result of this discovery?"

"I know not nor do I care," said Connal, resolutely; "the good fortune

that must be purchased by mental treachery would be more oppressive to me than all the accumulated evils of my lot."

"And what shall I say on my return to the castle?" said Desmond, dejectedly.

"Say nothing of me."

Armida had not quitted her apartment all day, and she passed her time in traversing it with burning cheeks and a rapid step, as if she meant to fly from her own thoughts. In the evening Rosine entered her room, and in a few words told her unsuccessful commission. It was twilight: she could not observe the change in Armida's countenance as she spoke, and after a long interval of silence she again repeated that Desmond had informed her he was well acquainted with the history of the unfortunate female, but was forbid to disclose a particular of it within the walls of the castle. Armida was still silent, and Rosine, believing that it proceeded from in-

difference to what she had said, approached to converse with her usual familiarity, when she was terrified by Armida suddenly starting from the sofa on which she was sitting, and repelling her with a gesture of desperation.

The passions she has been all day struggling with now burst forth.

"Oh, dupe, dupe, that I was," she exclaimed, wildly striking her forehead, "thoughtless, senseless ideot, to be imposed on by his indifference; to believe there was such a monster as a man without passions: I imposed on myself. He never deceived me; his coldness left me no excuse for my infatuation. The talents that have excited admiration in far different circles, the songs that Italian princes have supplicated to hear, were lavished on a savage Irishman, and he scorned them: no wonder—he was revelling in thought with his cottage paramour; immaculate purity! You came, palled and weary with the blandishments of your

favourite; and Armida Fitzalban, with all her talents, had the honour of winding you up to fresh spirits, like a Circassian slave dancing before the mighty master of the seraglio."

All the haughty passions of her soul flashed in her face as she spoke, and the step with which she crossed seemed designed to crush the whole race of O'Morven into dust. Terrified as Rosine was by her passions, she yet rejoiced to find that her pride predominated, for she trembled at the consequences of this ill-omened attachment. But the feelings of Armida soon subsided.

"How often," she exclaimed, "did I think him a being above the temptations of sense, and only alive to the passions. He has no heart—none: oh, could he have had one, and seen so much of mine without compassion? What night was that we were together on the island? Oh! why did he not let me perish on the waters that night? That night I believ-

ed he loved me: yes, when the waves came dashing over us, when I clung to him, not in hope but in despair, the looks he threw on me were dark and bright with grief and love. The lightning that shewed me his looks had no terror; I watched for its flashes to see him; and when twice he snatched me from death, was it but bare humanity?"

Touched by her distress, Rosine faintly suggested that bare humanity might be all that interested him in the fate of the unhappy female.

"But would he not have spoken? would he not have told me all you have said in a single look? A single word would have brought conviction to my heart. He let me depart without a look."

Rosine was silent. Armida felt it in every fibre of her proud heart.

"I am not what I was," said she, "I am not what I was. The first of his sex never drew a sigh from me before;

never made my heart beat with hope or fear. Let him boast of his triumph if he will, over my grave: my heart may be broken, but never can be humbled. Could I seek his love, I were as unworthy of it as the creature that is preferred to me."

Rosine, who trembled more and more as the impassioned character of Armida developed itself, and the evils of this ill-fated attachment rose to her view, strenuously applauded her sentiments, and endeavoured, even by topics drawn from her pride, to support and confirm them.

"Oh! do not insult my despair; do not reason with me," cried Armida, again yielding to the wild vicissitudes of passion.

"You first mentioned his name to me; you first set me on fire with his praises: go to him yourself—learn the truth from him, adjure him to tell you all; but tell him not who is waiting in agony for his confession."

Rosine was silent, but her silence shewed her steady reluctance to undertake this shameful commission. Armida, blinded by passion, still importuned her.

"Will you be bribed?" she exclaimed, tearing off the diamond clasp of her robe, and throwing it at Rosine's feet; "will you be implored?" she continued, sinking on her knees before her. "Oh! be not so hard; I am not used to tears or to intreaty. A few days ago, and who would have foretold I would kneel to you, and for one who is perhaps as insensible as yourself."

Rosine was now compelled to an exertion of mind and resolution she had hitherto been scarce conscious of. Shocked as she was at the situation of Armida, and still more at the fatal prospect of her passion, she revolted, with all the strength of her mind and principles from the confession of such a passion from a woman on the point of being united to another. At suffering she

wept, but at the remotest possibility of guilt she shuddered; and with all the eloquence of virtue she adjured Armida to remember the solemnity of her engagements to Wandesford, the impossibility of a successful attachment to Connal, insulated as he was by every circumstance of nation, birth, and habit; and though she trembled at the word, she represented the still greater horror and iniquity of her being united to one man and attached to another; and not even Armida's pride or superior powers deterred her from displaying her consciousness of that attachment with a force that shewed she was better acquainted with the secrets of her heart than its possessor. Armida, though she still remained on her knees, and overwhelmed with tears, seemed touched with this appeal to her honour.

"I am ready to fulfil my engagements," she cried, "I am ready to marry Wandesford; and then, I swear on my knees, I swear never to think of him more; only

let me hear him vindicated; let me know him not degraded by a vile passion; let me think him the being I thought him yesterday: I ask but that thought to live on, and you may grant it," she added still more wildly, "for if I must be the wife of Wandesford, I feel I shall not live too long."

Heart-sick and appalled, Rosine sunk into a chair. "Oh! Armida," she cried, "I am weary of importunity; I am terrified by passion; I will interfere or resist you no more, but I cannot do what you require: I will go no further in this business."

"You will not!" cried Armida, starting from her knees: her long hair fell over her face as she rose, she flung *it* back, and flashed the full lightnings of her eyes on Rosine: "Then you would not have him justified; you love him yourself."

"Rosine could have smiled at the suggestion, but the maniac figure before her

was no subject for smiles; and she said with a firmness that commanded the passions and faculties even of Armida, "You have at length found a way to subdue me, Armida; but it is a way neither honourable to your generosity or to my affection." She was quitting the room, when Armida, who appeared at her last words to awake as if from a dream, called to her to stay.

Rosine paused: "Is it possible," she exclaimed, "is it then possible that I have sunk to this; that twice in one shameful day I have supplicated, and supplicated in vain; that I have forgot my birth, my character, my pride for a stranger, a savage stranger? Am I Armida Fitzalban?

"Rosine," she cried, her native character returning, "let this night be erased for ever from your mind, as I wipe away the traces of these shameful tears, the first and last that passion shall ever wring from me."

As she spoke, with an emotion that made language impossible, she rushed into her boudoir, and Rosine did not attempt to follow her.

During the remainder of the night all was gay in the castle; and to the officers Lady Montclare appeared a charming woman, and Wandesford the happiest of men. Lady Kilcarrick alone, who still remained at the castle, was silent and anxious. She had profited but little by her observations: the rapid changes of Armida's mind baffled her penetration, and the mysterious and mutual avoidance of Endymion and Desmond, while it excited her curiosity, defied it. Lady Montclare, too, in spite of the external smoothness of her manner, at times betrayed an inquietude that suggested doubts, which were increased by her long private conferences with the monk, and her evident impatience for the union of Armida and Wandesford: at length, finding she could make nothing of them

as they were, she determined to draw the enemy out of their entrenchments, and invited the whole family to an entertainment, which she said she gave in honour of Lady Montclare's arrival in Ireland. Wandesford eagerly accepted it, though he hated Lady Kilcarrick, as it gave him an opportunity of appearing publicly as the intended husband of Armida; and Lady Kilcarrick set off the next day to prepare Lady Gabriella for the important part, and to summon all the country to her fête. Armida at first determined not to go, but she was no longer the mistress of her own actions, and she had no excuse for resisting the importunities of Wandesford: during the interval, she remained in her apartment, into which not even Rosine was invited; nor for a week did she quit the walls, or even approach the casements of the castle that looked to the shore.

But though her pride could command her feelings, it could not her health.

She was consuming with a slow fever of mind and body, and one night that the officers who, now were constantly at the castle, were dining with Wandesford, and Lady Montclare shut up with Morosini, parched and panting for the cold sea-breeze, she threw on her veil and walked on the rocky terrace with Rosine: they had taken several turns in silence, when they observed a figure slowly approaching them; it was almost dark, and till they passed her, they did not discover the woman they had seen in the cottage: she paused as if with a wish to address them, but Armida moved rapidly on, yet the next moment turned and encountered her: the woman now made a visible effort to detain them, though she did not speak, and Armida, after a few quick unequal steps, paused:

"Does he send her here to insult me?" said she in a stifled voice: "this was needless, and he shall know it," and collecting all her spirits, she turned: "Oh,

lady, will you but listen to me," said the woman sinking to the ground as she approached.

"What would you say?" said Armida, calmly.

Between weakness, fear, and the dignity of Armida's presence, the woman did not hear, but anxious to detain her, she again said tremblingly, "Noble, beautiful lady, will you listen for one moment?"

The wretched Armida leaned on Rosine for support. "Am I noble, am I beautiful," she repeated in agony, "am I distinguished by nature and fortune, and yet I am wretched! I tremble before a creature upon whom perhaps my whole sex looks with contempt."

"If you have any thing to say to Miss Fitzalban," said Rosine, "proceed."

"Will she listen to the speech of such a creature as I am? I would not dare to speak of myself, but for one that is beyond all the world beside." She stopped,

and Armida, over whose mind a vague hope began to dawn, desired her to go on."

"I was not always such a creature as I am now," said the woman, drying her tears: "I was the child of an honest man, whom my wickedness killed: he was a tenant of old O'Morven, at the tower yonder. I used to see him at chapel, but I did not go there to mind my religion, or any thing but Connal O'Morven: Oh! from the first day I saw him coming there with his grandfather leaning on him, and putting him in his place, and never lifting his eyes from the altar while he staid, and bowing to us as he led the old man out, I thought I could die on the spot for a look from him: at first I was so melancholy, I did not think it could be love for him, till one day as I was sitting at the cabin door, he rode past on an unruly horse; and as I looked after him as far as I could see, he dropped his whip: oh, I thought I never would be in

time enough to pick it up for him, and when I did, and gave it to him, he thanked me in such a voice: oh! the sound of it will come to my ears when I am dying. As he rode away, some briar-roses that he had in his breast dropped from it: when he was gone I caught them up, and though their scent was gone, I kept them in my hand, and stood looking after him, though I could not see him, till I could stand no longer. From that minute I gave myself up to a wicked mind: I was a likely girl, and I thought I might please him as well as another. I was always throwing myself in his way, and going to chapel, and keeping near the old tower, and at last when he met me, he would blush, but I never could get look or word from him, for he minded nothing but his grandfather or his brother, to keep him to his book, and from running after the girls.

"Then, my lady, I grew desperate like, and minded nothing, and my poor

father finding he could get no good of me, sent me to my uncle that was in a very good way at Birr, in the King's County, and I went there; but I did no good there neither, for though I was a modest girl before, yet thinking so much of one man, made me at last that I could think of nothing else, and I minded nothing but going to the square to look at the officers, for I was determined. Colonel Wandesford was there with his regiment then, and oh! how can I tell my shameful story to such honourable ladies. When he left it, he took me with him to England: he was very fond of me at first, and he brought me to London among all the fine people; and I thought with myself I ought to be happy, but I never was. The thought of Connal O'Morven kneeling in the old ruined chapel was the only thing I loved to think of: and I would rather have been sitting on this stone watching for a sight of him, than in all the fine places I was brought to: for though I

was so bad, I was not bad enough for what I was, and the oaths and the wicked things I heard frightened me, though I had brought myself to it. I knew it was wicked to go on as I did, yet I was not good enough to leave off; and though I had no pleasure in the clothes and fine things I had, I thought I would miss them now I was used to them, but I had grown so melancholy, that the colonel began to be tired of me, and when the regiment was going to Italy, he told me yawning one day, he would not take me with him. Oh! then my heart was ready to break: I was all alone in a strange country, and I could not go into the streets, or speak to any body without being known for an Irishwoman, so nobody would like to employ or trust me, and I had lived so long in idleness, that half the work I could do before would kill me now. I begged and prayed him on my knees to take me for a servant, or give me to some one else to keep me out

of want and wickedness, but he only laughed and went out from me. I saw him no more for some days, and in the mean time I found myself in a situation that I was sure he would not quit me, and the next time we met I told him so, and intreated him for his child's sake not to turn its mother into the streets; but he fell into such a passion on hearing of it, that I thought he would murder me. He cursed and swore, and beat me as long as I could stand, and longer, for I only remember falling on the ground and begging him not to kill me, for I was not fit to die; and all that went to my heart was his saying the child was not his own, though he knew it was as well as I, for I never was false in my life but to him. The people of the house came up and took him from me, and I remember no more of that night, nor many a night after: I was not myself. The people thought I was dying, and I wish I had died before I had lived to bring trouble

on Connal O'Morven. It was a great while before I was myself again, and then I remembered every thing in a moment, and asked where the colonel was: they bid me keep myself quiet, and then I knew there was something worse than they would tell me, and they sat watching me all night, and I kept quiet for fear of them, till at last one went away after another, and the only one that staid fell asleep: then I got out of bed as softly as I could, and began to look about the room—I hardly knew it again: all the ornaments and presents the colonel had given me were gone; the people had taken them I suppose for their trouble. On the table there was a letter and a bottle, both directed to me: I did not know what it meant till I read the letter, and then the light left my eyes, and the whole room looked on fire to me: it was from Colonel Wandesford, the man that had ruined me, that left me and his child to famish. He told me that he sent me a

a bottle of laudanum, and the best thing I could do was to drink it and end my cares at once; but if he ever knew me to follow him again, he would shoot me with his own hand: my heart was so forlorn and broken, that I thought I could not do better than take his advice.

"I looked about me; all the house was quiet: the woman that staid to watch me was fast asleep, and I thought before she awoke I would be out of the way of giving more trouble to her or to any one else. The thoughts of my religion came across me once or twice, but when I thought of that, I thought too of the chapel where I had first seen Connal, and since he did not care for me, why should I live.

"I took up the laudanum, and just at that moment the poor baby stirred within me; I felt it for the first time, and from that minute, let me be as wretched as I could, I determined to live.

"I got out of the house unknown to

them, and, weak as I was, I was far enough from London before morning. I need not tell you, my lady, all I had to do to keep life in the child and myself for three years that I wandered about looking for work: every where, because I was an Irish woman, they thought me a rogue, and at last I thought I could not be worse in Ireland; so I came over, and when I was once in Ireland, I could not bear to be any where but where I was born, and where O'Morven was: I begged and worked my way here at last, about a week ago; it was night when I came; every thing seemed changed, yet I remembered every thing well. I did not dare to go near my father's house, and I sat down near this on a stone to think how I had left it an honest girl, and but for my own wicked heart, how I might have been a happy one. I could have sat there for ever and cried my life away, but my poor child began to cry too: it was cold and hungry, and I had nothing

to give it; and though I had no heart to ask for food myself, I thought my father would not see it starve at his door: I got up and crawled towards the cabin; all was dark, I waited for a light or a step for an hour, at last my child cried louder, and I knocked; no one answered. I cannot go on," said the wretched woman, weeping bitterly. "The next day I heard my father was dead—dead for my wickedness and folly; I broke his heart; I killed my father.

"I wandered about some days: I don't know how, nor where I lived, nor where I lay; I wonder I was not killed: I believe the mark of God was on me, and that no one cared to hurt the like of me.

"Of all I knew once no one minded or looked after me; I would have perished but for Connal O'Morven: the very one that I tried to ruin in my folly and wickedness was the one to save me. He kept my child from starving; he

fixed me in a cabin with his nurse, and I came to myself; he got the priest to take my confession, and to give me absolution.

"He would talk to me for hours, and his voice was the first thing that brought me to my senses; when I heard it, the thoughts of my youth came into my heart, and tears fell from me for the first time, and that crying was better to me than food or sleep: when I was able he read to me out of a book, and bid me 'go and sin no more,' and I felt as if some angel took away the burning in my head, and the tightness that I felt about my heart.

"I was growing calm, and thinking to do something for myself, when I heard all of a sudden that Colonel Wandesford was come down to the castle to marry you, my lady." Armida trembled, but she did not speak. "It was like a flash of lightning to me when I heard it; I thought nothing but that he was come to

murder me, for my head grew unsettled again: I ran home to the cabin and locked myself in: they asked what ailed me, but I could not tell, nor knew what was going to happen to me.

"I dreamed that night Colonel Wandesford came to me all on fire, like the devil from hell, and he thrust the fire into my eyes, and head, and breast, and I got up screeching and ran out; the people in the cabin were fast asleep, and for two days and nights I wandered, still thinking to hide from him, for I was quite beside myself, and that night you saw me on the rock I thought he was running after me, and I threw myself into the sea from him. It was Connal O'Morven that saved my life that night; I wish he had let me die so he saved the child, for then he would never have been brought to trouble for the like of me, for ever since that night he comes to the cabin, but not as he used to do: he never speaks to me,

nor looks at the child, but he sighs as if his heart was full; and once that he was sitting at the door with his hands over his face, I saw by the way he tossed his hair forward when he got up he had been in tears. Oh! my lady, all I ever suffered was nothing to that: my whole generation is not worth one tear of his; and I am sure by the looks he gives me I am some how the cause of it, and I dare not ask him, my heart is so full, and I have such a reverence for him: they are not angry looks, but full of sorrow, and when he smiles through them, sometimes it is like a knife going into my heart, and so I knew, since there was blame and unhappiness some way, it was best for me to tell the whole story, sad and shameful as it was, to your ladyship, for all I wish is that O'Morven was happy, and that I and my child were in the grave."

Again she burst into an agony of tears,

but she might have wept for ever unheard by Armida. Gasping with different emotions, she said, mentally :—

"Is this innocence, or is it mockery? Am I the object of derision even to this creature, or may I not become so if I utter another word?"

Rosiné, astonished and perplexed, applied to her in vain to answer the woman.

"I dare not speak to her," said Armida: "she has seen my heart: a woman cannot avoid the penetration of a woman."

Rosine thus called upon, said firmly—

"What reason have you for relating your story to Miss Fitzalban, or imagining she could be interested in any thing relating to O'Morven?"

The woman appeared confounded, but in a few minutes she said in a tremulous voice,

"I will tell you, my lady, I will tell you the whole truth, and what made me

intrude with my shameful story on such a noble lady. I saw O'Morven whenever he came to the cabin, and he had a black rose in his breast, and he would take it out and press it to his lips, and to his bosom, as I would a child, and if I am a living woman, I saw that flower, it is black velvet, in her ladyship's hair not ten days ago; she wore it just on her white forehead: I knew it well, though I saw her but once before that night, and so I thought—I don't know what I thought, but that it was best to tell her ladyship every thing, for if O'Morven is not blamed I don't care if I was thought the vilest wretch on earth, as I am."

Armida now struggled in vain with the feelings that overcame her: she would have assured the woman of her protection, of her pity; but she had no voice; and eagerly throwing her purse at the woman's feet, she turned away.

"He is again the idol of my imagina-

tion," she cried; "his image appears to me once more in its original brightness; I am happy though I never saw him more. It is the character—the hero I love, not the man.

"And was I not worthy," she mused, "to be entrusted with this? How is it that he can thus repel the heart he has subdued."

"Hush, hush," said Rosine; "I see him on the rock below: I have seen him every night since your last meeting: he seems to listen to the sound of the waves, but his eyes are fixed for ever on the windows of your apartment."

"Oh! fly Rosine, fly—pursue that woman, and tell her, as she values my protection, or dreads my resentment, never to mention to Connal that she saw me to-night."

Rosine retired, though reluctantly, and Armida approached to meet Connal.

The light of a pale autumnal moon, struggling through watery vapours, con-

cealed the struggles of pride and passion in her countenance as she advanced, determined to hide the secret of her heart, and force from her proud slave the confession of her power.

He folded his arms, and coldly bowed at her approach. The majestic submission of his figure touched her, and she hastened to speak before her impressions of resentment were effaced, but just in view was the very spot where he had saved her life on the day of arrival at the castle, and she could only observe:—

"How little value you have for the life you preserved."

"I would sacrifice my own to protract it for one moment," said Connal, passionately.

"Am I to believe your language or your actions?" said Armida, unconsciously softened. "You have indeed preserved my life, yet you could deliberately devote it to wretchedness."

Connal started.

"You saw me on the point of union with a monster: you were acquainted with circumstances that would have made me renounce him for ever: you refused to disclose them: you resigned me to him without reluctance: you could have preserved me from worse than death, could and would not."

"I dared not."

"Dared not!" repeated Armida, scornfully. "Do you fear Wandesford?"

"I fear no human being but myself. When I suspect my own heart no temptations can urge me to yield to its dictates, and would not others too have doubted the motives I doubted myself."

In these words Armida felt she was mistress of his fate, and determined to exert her power to the utmost: she demanded if he had disclosed the story of the deserted woman: what motive could the disclosure possibly have been ascribed to, but that of common interest in the fate of a stranger. Connal gazed

wildly on her; his voice was lost; he retreated; he rushed back and sunk at her feet.

"Will you then force it from me; the secret I would have kept on the rack; the last retreat of a proud and agonizing heart: you shall—I adore you: start not back; by heaven you shall not: the death-wound of my pride shall be revenged on your own: the beggared outcast, devoted Connal, dares to love you, he dares to tell you so; even now while your heart swells with pride, while your eyes flash with anger, he invites your scorn, he bids you spurn him that he may fly from you for ever."

But had he dared to raise his eyes to Armida while he spoke, he would have seen no scorn in her eyes, no banishment in her lips.

Contending with her emotion, she faintly asked:—

"Was it then a proof of passion that he had refused by disclosing the story of

the unfortunate female to save her from an union with Wandesford."

"Yes, a proof of passion the most exquisite: a proof that none but a heart silent and devoted like mine could give. Oh! had I but uttered a word of that story; had I but looked; had I but thought of it; a word, a look would have betrayed the secret I would have died before I had told; but could I have borne to appear to you, to your proud family, an officious slanderer, who, destitute of claims, feeds his mean malice by disturbing their peace."

"Proud and selfish being!" said Armida, mentally; "his own feelings, his proud reserve, his sullen dignity, is all he values:" and she said aloud with haughty irony:—"Is this the softness and submission of a man who loves? You struggle like a lion in toils, and convert your very homage into a reproach."

"Oh! what had I to do with love?" exclaimed Connal, still more wildly;

"what had a thing like me to do, to gaze on you; the wolf that bays the moon has more reason, more hope than I: from the first moment I beheld you I fled your sight; I hid myself among rocks, and you were there; I closed my eyes, and they beheld you still; I wrapped my heart in pride and reserve, and the pressure kept your image closer there. What have I to do with love; far, far away my course must lie, from the fairy isles of beauty and of love, my dark and perilous course. To me life is an ocean in storm; I am embarked in the wreck of a ruined name; I stand on its last fragment, and stand alone: I will sink not without a struggle, but without a murmur; thus hopeless, heartless, fortuneless—cut off from life, almost forgotten by heaven, what have I to do with love?"

Armida's resolution shook with every word he uttered, and she collected its last remains to say in a voice that con-

tradicted her language—of hopeless passion it was fruitless to prolong the pain by complaint.

"Yes," said Connal, sadly, "we must part; go like the sun to light other worlds, and leave mine in darkness; for the one bright gleam you shed on the existence of a wretch he will bless you for ever; my long night will be without a ray, but not without a dream: on my desolate rock the light of your image will visit me, as the moon does the cell of the maniac, it brings madness with it, but it brings the joy of madness too; it shines on him, and amid chains and straw he laughs at the pride of kings. Go, for what have you to do with one like me; go, and shed the influence of your brilliant and lovely mind on the gay, the eminent, and the fortunate. Oh! fortunate they must be who behold it. They will worship you, and you will enjoy their homage: but will they love you like him who on his lone rock will still

see naught but you, who, amid wretchedness and ruin, will think of you alone; will they love like Connal?—oh! never, never!"

Armida now felt she must tear herself away, yet determined that this should not be their final parting. She faintly observed, if they must part, their parting might at least be less abrupt, and naming the night of the fête, told him she would be there.

"But I shall not be there," said Connal, retreating, and folding himself in his mantle.

Confounded and incensed at this refusal, she demanded if he had not been invited.

"Yes," answered Connal, gloomily, "I have been insulted with an invitation, but I will not go. The grandfather of that woman was the servant of mine, and grew rich by his spoils. Must I go to see the plunder of my family shining on her walls? I hate those revels. The

very air you breathe is the sighs of her racked and wretched tenantry: the luxurious heat you inhale is purchased by their resting, after a day of toil, on the naked floor of their hovels: the only light of their wintry nights is borrowed from the glare of the torches that conduct you to her feast. I hate those revels. When folly is contrasted with misery, its colour darkens into guilt. The country is bleeding under ignorance, poverty, and superstition, and we cast over its wounds a gay embroidered garment of voluptuousness, beneath which the heavings and shudderings of its agony are but more frightfully visible."

Armida, who expected that the slightest hint of her presence would have made him rush uninvited to meet her, imagined that his refusal arose from not understanding her, and in language that she believed equal to a command, again intimated her expectation that he would meet her there.

"I will not go," said Connal, resuming all his Milesian character. "Once I was there with my grandfather—I was there to see him placed in the lowest seat at her table, amid men whose fathers feasted with his servants: and when their splendid equipages came to convey them home, I had to lead him through a crowd of sneering, pampered ruffians, who grinned to see O'Morven with no other support than the solitary arm of his grandson. With one blow I felled those who were nearest me to the ground, and quitted her walls never to enter them again."

Unused to opposition, Armida lost all self-command at this refusal.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "am I the daughter of Lord Montclare; am I her whose look was once equal to a command, whose words were obeyed almost before they were uttered. Oh! why was I insulted with the mockery of superior reverence, when even the com-

pliances the meanest of my sex receive are withheld from me. The first request I ever stooped to make is rejected to my face: the only man I ever deigned to solicit refuses to sacrifice an absurd and savage pride to my intreaty."

"To a Milesian," replied Connal, "the sacrifice of his life is trivial to the sacrifice of his pride."

Armida contended no more, but, retiring, in a broken voice she said:—

"You are right; I should thank you. You dreaded my weakness: you feared that yielding to the softness of the moment I might there have uttered something you would hear with reluctance; that I might have disclosed what our short tumultuous meeting would not permit. You have saved me perhaps from doing what would have made me hate myself. I have now no excuse for not bidding you farewel for ever."

As she spoke she turned away, yet the moonlight that shewed her parting

figure showed too a gleam of passion struggling through the cloud of pride, anger, and shame, that darkened her angel features.

She was retiring, when Connal, on whom a new sun seemed to rise, sprung forward, and with that mixture of awe and boldness which love alone can teach, detained her, while he knelt at her feet.

"Armida," he cried, "you do not hate me."

Armida struggled to release the hand he held.

"Armida, I adore you."

Her struggles insensibly abated.

"Armida, we must never meet again."

He sprung from the ground, and darting from her sight, disappeared in a moment.

Chilled, lost, annihilated, Armida remained on the rocks alone. Was it Connal she heard? Was it Connal who quitted her? Was it the man whose prostrate homage, whose burning confes-

sion but a moment before had almost drawn from her the secret of her heart? Was it he who had voluntarily bid her an eternal farewel! Neither her pride nor love could sustain the shock. Her reason was disturbed, and she continued to repeat the words—'We never meet again,' without remembering their meaning. At length the voice of Wandesford, who, much intoxicated, had quitted his party, and had come out in search of her, restored her recollection. Starting with horror at the sound, she flew from him with the swiftness of a bird, and reached her apartment before he could recognise who it was that had escaped him.

He now roamed up and down the passages of the castle, cursing, complaining, and demanding Armida from every servant he saw, till Lady Montclare, finding her efforts to pacify him ineffectual, had recourse to Rosine, to whom even in drunkenness he paid a kind of surly re-

spect, and who at last succeeded in persuading him to retire; but it was so long before she could accomplish this that she did not get to Armida's apartment till some hours after midnight. Armida was reading; the tapers that burned before her shed so little light through the vast and sombrous chamber, that Rosine did not mark her peculiar expression; and in the burning spot that dyed her cheek, her loose hair, and trembling hands, she imagined she saw the confusion and the glow of triumphant love. Agitated with hope and fear, Rosine demanded the result of her conference with Connal. Armida made two or three attempts to speak: at length, with a convulsive effort, she said:—

"We have parted, never to meet more."

"What can this mean?" exclaimed Rosine in amazement. "Is this parting the result of principle, or of some new discovery?"

"It would be easy for me," said Armida, with an agonizing smile, "to invent a proud tale of his having knelt to me, and of my rejecting him; but sufferings make us sincere. He has rejected me: his own lips pronounced that we must part for ever, and that too when——"

Her voice was choaked, but rising with dignity, she added:—

"Little does he think how I will be revenged."

"Revenged!—on whom?" cried Rosine.

"On myself, on the weakness, the folly of the degraded heart that brought me to this: the woman that has thus sacrificed her pride can make it but one dreadful reparation.—Within a week I shall be wedded to Wandesford and to despair."

Rosine burst into tears.

"Now go, Rosine," said Armida, exhausted; "leave me, I implore you; my

reason I believe has been disturbed already, and if I speak, or think, or listen much longer, even Connal might feel remorse for the misery he had brought on me."

CHAP. II.

I spoke to try thy love, she said:
I'll ne'er wed man but thee:
My grave shall be my bridal bed,
Ere Grame my husband be.
LANCASHIRE TRAGEDY.

BUT two days had now to elapse till the fête was to be given; and when the night arrived that she was to appear in public as the destined wife of Wandesford all her resolution seemed to fail.

She at first intended to appear with the utmost simplicity of dress, till recollecting that splendid ornaments might withdraw attention from the expression of despair in her countenance, she put on a dress that she had worn at a brilliant Parisian fête, and tried, by the lustre of diamonds, and an unusual quantity of

rouge, to veil her features from observation. But while adjusting her gorgeous dress, her hands trembled while she thought of the change in her character since she had worn that habit, when, conscious of resistless loveliness and commanding talent, she seemed only to claim and receive homage from every eye and heart; while now, heartless, dispirited, and deserted, she only wished to hide from that admiration which contrasted the neglect of one for whom she would have exchanged all.

Wandesford, insensible alike to her sufferings and her aversion, gratified his pride by the thought of his appearing in the possession of so much beauty and talents.

His vanity might indeed be indulged by the contemplation of her beauty, for never was it more resplendent: formed to dazzle and to shine, her dress was perfectly adapted to the character of her figure, and the fixed expression of her

countenance, though suggesting to a feeling spectator the idea of intense and silent suffering, gave the superficial one an idea of calmness that suffered him at leisure to contemplate features whose perfection any change almost seemed to diminish.

In the mean time crowds arrived from every part of the country. Though Armida had resided some months in Ireland, she had been seen but by few; and the curiosity which her character, her talents, her beauty, and her situation excited, had never till this night obtained a chance of gratification: all came alike prepared to wonder, to admire, to envy, and to discover defects. Of her beauty there was but one opinion—an universal murmur, almost amounting to acclamation, announced the universal sensation. Armida heard it, but no longer with pleasure or pride, and the consciousness of this change in her feelings deepened her melancholy; but when the first gaze

was over, her unchanged features, her motionless attitude wearied the eye, and the youthful and animated beauty of Lady Gabriella, though of a common character, more than divided the admiration of the company.

Lady Kilcarrick, who, to give splendour to her entertainment, was content that even Lady Gabriella should be eclipsed for a time, now advanced to Armida to intreat her to sing, and at the same time the folding doors of the spacious music-room were thrown open, displaying amid a blaze of lights the superb harp and piano, so often sacrificed to Gabriella's neglect: but this, by reminding her of former scenes, only increased her inability; and accustomed to exercise her talents only when inspired by feeling, she retreated with a timidity which was for the first time falsely ascribed to pride; this only increased the importunity that assailed her, loudly mixed with Wandesford's angry expostulations, till feeling

less power to contend than even to comply, she rose and placed herself beside the harp. The attitude she assumed, though unconsciously, formed so perfect a picture, that the circle waited as if for the strains of a muse they imagined they saw. Formerly this admiration would have excited her talents, but since a deeper sentiment had touched her heart, it gave her no sensation but embarrassment or pain. Her hands wandered over the chords. The harp is adapted for airs of expression, but with expression, or any thing connected with emotion, she dreaded to trust herself, and imagining she had still sufficient powers to execute difficulties, she hastily arose and went to the piano. Wandesford placed a bravura song of Catalani's before her, and reluctantly she begun the symphony. Habit supplied the place of talent for a time, and she sung a few bars with her usual excellence, but when she came to the passages of execution, she found her

voice as much impaired as her musical feelings; and the volubility and compass that could once have filled a theatre were totally gone. Amazed and depressed, she stopt, and saw on every side that painful expression with which admiration contends with pity. Wandesford now almost with oaths insisted on her proceeding. Oppressed and intimidated, she vainly declared it was impossible: he persisted, till looking round the circle for compassion, her eye caught that of Desmond, sparkling with something like a tear, and laying her damp and trembling hand on his, she asked if it were possible with such hands to strike a chord.

"Impossible," cried Desmond, and taking the hand she held out to him, he led her away before Wandesford, who, too much incensed to speak, did not follow her.

Lady Kilcarrick seized on this unexpected moment to place Lady Gabri-

ella at the instrument, not without contrasting her forward compliance with the caprice of Italian singers, where she continued for an hour to exercise the patience of her hearers, who in vain wished for the relief of the broken but exquisite notes of Armida.

The dancing now commenced, and Wandesford, striding over to the remote corner where Armida was seated, reminded her of her engagement to dance with him.

"I do not intend to dance," said Armida, starting from a reverie, and hardly recognizing the person who spoke to her.

"What," said Wandesford, with sarcastic rudeness, "has the sea air deprived you of the use of your limbs as well as your voice? You had better, madam, wander less on the rocks. Have you forgot you are engaged to me?"

A spark of its native haughtiness kindled in Armida's heart, as she answered:—

"No, I have not forgot, but you seem

to forget that you not only anticipate your privileges, but abuse them; they do not extend to insult yet."

He seized her reluctant hand and led her to the seat; and Lady Kilcarrick, who saw her dejected figure, anticipated a new triumph for her darling Gabriella; but here she was mistaken: voice is a local quality, of which the slightest accident may divest the possessor; but while Armida's figure retained life, it was impossible it could lose its celestial grace, and though to herself her movements appeared lifeless and mechanical, they converted the dancers almost into spectators: but Wandesford, who remembered the animation, the vivid and visible language of her action, when he had seen her in Italy, and believing her present languor to be solely the result of caprice or contempt, whispered the most insulting sarcasms to her with every opportunity, and danced with a negligence which filled every one with indig-

nation but Armida: at length, at the close of the set, he awkwardly entangled part of his dress in her's, and detached it again with such rude violence, that her light drapery gave way, and, glad of an opportunity, she hastened from the dance. Lady Gabriella, inwardly delighted at an accident that removed her resistless rival, followed her with a rude laugh, which was scarce concealed by her affected concern at the accident, and her offers to assist in repairing it.

Armida glanced at her dress, which consisting of the slightest gauze over silken drawers, had given way in every direction, and accepted her offer to retire to her dressing-room.

This room, like the rest, had been laid out for company, but was now empty; the lights burnt dimly through the thick foliage with which it was adorned. The coolness, the calmness, and the rich and deeply shaded green of this little apartment, presented a delightful contrast to

the noise and heat of that she had quitted; and with the hope of composing herself rather than her dress, she entreated Lady Gabriella to return to her party.

"I am sorry for your accident," said Gabriella, tripping away, "for as you are so fond of dancing you must be greatly disappointed. I'll send my cousin Rosine to you."

"Do not," said Armida, "she is fond of dancing."

"She! oh, poor creature, it will be quite a charity to prevent her exposing that old frightful blue dress: she has had it these three winters, till the colour is quite dead, and she has raised the ghost of it again to night to frighten us."

Armida mentally thought of the lines--

> But oh! what masquers richly dight,
> Can boast of bosoms half so light.
>
> WALTER SCOTT.

She was now alone; she sunk on a seat;

a large mirror was opposite to her; involuntarily her figure was presented to her; her torn dress, the perfumed and brilliant roses that had adorned it, hanging on the ground; her hair, which had been so lightly arranged, that the slight motion of her dancing had loosened it, and her rouge, whose unwarying, unimpassioned dye seemed to mock the vicissitudes of feeling that wandered over her mind.

The music, and the sounds of mirth still reached her ear, and she thought, with a kind of melancholy surprise, of the crowds of trivial, uninteresting, unendowed characters, that, without a power of communicating pleasure, could thus busily enjoy it; while she, for whose approach pleasure seemed to wait as for a signal, alone, neglected, deserted, listened to its sound like an exile to the songs of his native country. The mystery of her fate seemed to oppress her like a spell;

again her eyes fell on the mirror; it displayed an image of beauty still perfect, an expression of genius still unimpaired, though clouded and dim: there was no external cause for this desolation of the heart, and she mentally asked whence it proceeded. A voice from within her uttered the name of Connal: it was a tone of reproach. Connal, she repeated again: softer recollections accompanied the sound, and it was a tone of sorrow—alone, unheard, no witness to check the wild and weeping luxury of passion, she sighed forth the name a third time—it was the tone of love. A rustling noise in the foliage started her—she turned: he whose name she had called on (as if by enchantment) stood before her.

Her first impulse was to fly from the apartment, and she only paused to cast a glance on the intruder that was intended to transfix or strike him to the dust; but that glance shewed him in an attitude

so hopeless, yet so pleasing, that she lingered involuntarily.

"That look bids me begone," said Connal, "and yet I dare to stay. The wretch who is self-condemned listens without terror to his sentence: I have no defence, no plea to offer. The madness of passion urged me last night, when I avowed the secret of my heart—passion to madness again brought me here."

"Have we not parted for ever?" said Armida, repeating his words with melancholy triumph.

"We have, we have," cried Connal, "and therefore I dared to venture here: I had no hope, no wish to meet you: to catch a glimpse of your form, to guess even at its shadow, perhaps to hear the sound of your voice, or even of your name, to mix the sighs of passion and despair with the incense that was breathed around you, even though they could never reach you—this was all I dared to

think of. I wandered round the gardens, till I found this apartment had a communication with them: I gazed on you madly, believing I could retire from the view when I would; but I heard you sigh, and forgot every thing. Oh! turn not from me, I am humbled below scorn, I am unhappy beyond all fear."

Armida lingered; he ventured to approach: "And can the brilliant enchantress, amid these bowers of luxury, so suited to the sweet spells she casts on the heart and senses, can she have cause for a sigh?"

"The sigh was not for myself," said Armida, and she trembled lest she had said too much.

"Oh! happy is he whose thought is embalmed by your sigh," murmured Connal.

"Then let him be happy in my tears too," said Armida, and they flowed unrestrained.

"Oh! heaven," he exclaimed, rush-

ing to her feet, "do you weep, can you weep: I thought you all pride and artificial feeling: I thought you a being only formed for homage: one who if the world was prostrate at your feet would not stoop to bid it rise."

"We were then mistaken in our views of each other," said Armida, weeping still. "Oh! yet, yet, let me live on this moment; let me impress it on my heart for ever, that I beheld you weeping, and still you weep. For whom, oh! for whom are those tears?"

"What avails it for whom are my tears or smiles," said Armida, "since your lips have pronounced that we part for ever?"

"Oh! no," said Connal, shuddering, "it was my fate that pronounced it, the mystery of my fortune, the thought that is consuming my youth, and blasting life to my view: in the only moment of joy I ever knew that thought came across me, like a spectre. I started; I uttered a few

words of madness, and fled from you: and even now," he cried distractedly, "even now it visits me—it tells me 'tis madness to look on you, to listen to you, to linger near you."

He retreated from her, and throwing himself on the seat she had quitted, leaned his burning forehead against its edge: part of her drapery still rested on it: she attempted to draw it away, and as he raised his head to release it, he pressed it passionately to his eyes and lips."

Armida felt this was the last moment she dared to stay: "Go then," said she, in a broken voice, "and remember what I would never have told you but in our parting hour: she who weeps in secret never wept for hatred."

She was rushing away, but Connal was already at her feet, speechless, trembling, yet glowing and exalted. Speak, speak again: may I—dare I think—is the fate of the ruined Connal not indifferent?

Speak to save me from running wild with joy."

"Must I speak," said Armida, shedding the softest radiance of her beautiful eyes on him, "must I speak to confirm it."

"Oh! no, no, no," sobbed Connal, prostrating himself almost on the earth, and convulsively hiding his face in her robe, "utter not a word; I hear your silence—it is like the smiling silence of the angel guide of whom the departed spirit inquires his destiny."

There was a solemn, almost a sacred joy in the pause that followed.

"You shall know all," said Connal, slowly raising his head: "you shall know the dreadful secret of my heart to-morrow: my waywardness, my melancholy, my despair; you shall know it all."

In the rapid change of her feelings, Armida scarce heard these ominous words.

The difficulties of fortune she believed her rank and wealth could easily remove, and even Wandesford's claims were forgotten in this triumphant moment. He was still at her feet, when an approaching step startled them; and Lady Gabriella entering, exclaimed, "I thought you were alone, Miss Fitzalban."

Though Armida would have avowed the object of her approbation to an assembled world, she shrunk from this clandestine appearance, and she said faltering, with the necessity of falsehood, "I was here alone—Mr. O'Morven entered by accident: he mistook the way to the ball-room, which I was just going to shew him."

Connal could not utter a falsehood, but bowing to hide his blushes, he said, "I had no intention of intruding on Miss Fitzalban when I approached this apartment."

Lady Gabriella, secretly delighted that the handsome Milesian would grace

her ball; and ignorant that they had ever met before, readily believed them both, and glided away, inviting them to follow her.

"And will you not come?" said Armida, extending her white hand to him.

He must have been more than man who could resist her—her siren tone, her attitude, at once voluptuous and timid, intimating tenderness, and inviting to pleasure; her pride, her beauty, her passion, sparkling round her Calypso figure, and blending the softness of the woman with the splendour of the genii."

"Yes, I will go with you, enchantress," exclaimed Connal: "I care not for the event, for what can to-morrow bring that will not be lost in the remembrance of this night."

He then hurried from the boudoir, and Armida, after adjusting her dress, followed, but she had recollection enough to follow in another direction.

But what a different figure entered the ball-room from that which had quitted it—glowing, brilliant, e fea- tures sparkling with the tremulous, with the gem-like lustre of hope and passion; her form almost too bright and light for any element but air to support or to convey; her very vestments seemed to undergo a change like the Cameleon from the air she respired; and her whole figure realized the fable of the statue converted into woman by the charm of love. No longer shrinking into obscurity, she accepted the trembling hand that Connal offered, and when they joined the set, they scarce seemed beings of the same species with those who surrounded them.

When the dance began, all the other performers paused almost involuntarily. Envy was stifled by resistless admiration, and even applause by wonder. The perfection of their figures, the ease, lightness, and enjouement of their movements, the exquisite modulation of their atti-

tudes, that seemed to form a kind of visible music, gave to the spectators the idea of two descended genii mixing in the festivity. The light movements of Connal scarce disturbed a ringlet of the glossy hair that fell on his white neck: and as Armida's nymph-like form glided among the dancers, it appeared like a star sometimes passing through the clouds, sometimes sparkling as it emerged from them: all gazed with delight, but the anxious Rosine (who could as little account for Connal's appearance as for Armida's sudden re-animation) and the disappointed Gabriella.

The pressure of company towards the doors announced the approach of supper, and Connal, ignorant of the modern custom of the young, hurrying down to secure the best accommodations, waited with the reverence of other days, till every female had quitted the apartment. The supper-room was completely filled when he entered, but Lady Gabriella eagerly

displacing those near her, offered him a seat next herself, but Connal slightly bowing, placed himself at the back of Armida's chair, and intoxicated with his situation, forgot alike the luxuries of the feast and the gaze of strangers.

Never had they appeared to each other so resistless: that rose-coloured light which a brilliant entertainment diffuses on every object was more congenial to the voluptuous splendour of Armida's beauty than the gloom of rocks, or the paleness of moonlight: and Armida, who amidst all her passion revolted from the chill and stern character of Connal, his apathy of life, and his contempt of luxury, now amid scenes that renewed her former existence saw him all she wished, and like the sun-flower expanded in his unclouded rays.

Lady Montclare, who had observed the events of the night under her unvarying mask of suavity, at length excited Lady Kilcarrick to remove Connal from Armida,

but at the same time guarded her language so artfully, that it was impossible to urge her as authority, for the Lady Kilcarrick, who knew but one way of doing things, immediately approached Connal, and said plainly: "Mr. O'Morven, your marked attention to Miss Fitzalban is highly offensive to Colonel Wandesford."

Connal started, but soon recovering, said: "Did Colonel Wandesford commission your ladyship to give me this information?"

Wandesford, who was near, relieved Lady Kilcarrick from her perplexity, by demanding did he suppose he would contend with him about Miss Fitzalban: "It is useless for either of us to contend for an object so infinitely superior to us both."

Wandesford rejoined something almost unintelligible that intimated menace: the proud reply that already spoke from the eyes of Connal was prevented by a look from Armida, who had listened with ter-

ror to their conference. He bowed silently, but he retained his station. Wandesford filled bumper after bumper of Champagne till his spleen fermented into something like courage, and he began to pour forth a torrent of abuse against Ireland, her natives, and her national character. The cheeks of Connal and Desmond faithfully reflected the glow of their indignant hearts, and Desmond was bursting into reply, when a glance from his brother calmed and stilled him.

"There is a gentleman," said Wandesford, pointedly addressing Connal, "who would persuade us of the potency of an Irish howl over all the music in the world."

"To one who is insensible of its excellence," said Connal, "it would be in vain for me to impart the feelings which heaven has denied them."

"Aye!" exclaimed Wandesford, with a contemptuous shout, "I suppose your country, like its ancient inhabitants, is

the happiest, freest, and richest in the world."

"Sir," retorted Connal, his eyes flashing with a spirit that awed even Wandesford; "its infirmities, like those of a parent, are sacred to its sons: we cannot prevent their being violated by the eyes of a stranger, but we can defend them from being profaned by their tongues."

Wandesford was silent, and Armida, trembling at the spirit her own enchantments had raised, called on Connal to join her in the air which she had once heard him sing, accompanied by her lyre.

To Connal this public display was hateful, but the spell of Armida's smile was once more exerted, and though he blushed with almost female sensibility at the effort, he complied.

The rich, mingled, solemn stream of sound that rose on the loud, tumultuous gaiety of the revellers, hushed it in a moment into that deep silence that is the most audible language of pleasure. That

deep and heart thrilling expression which passion gives to the voice seemed to develope new resources in it, even to the singers themselves. Armida, accustomed to the science and modulation of Italian music, exerted all her powers to follow the wild and indefinite cadences of the Irish, and the exertion strongly resembled the influence of her mind on his, pursuing its wanderings, and shedding sweetness and brilliancy on its gloomy and inaccessible wildness. The silence that followed was only broken by Wandesford's whispering to the officers some of the lines of the air:

"Are the sons of Erin so good and cold,
They cannot be tempted by woman or gold."

Connal did not hear him; he appeared indignant at the situation in which he was placed, and no intreaties could prevail on him to sing again, though the intreaties were enforced by Armida's looks: "How," he murmured, "shall I sing the song in a strange land?"

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But though they ceased to sing, those looks, so full of eloquence and passion that they may be called the music of the eyes, with which they viewed each other, alarmed Lady Montclare, who, already apprehensive of the notice which the effeminate beauty of Endymion, and the close attention of Desmond to him excited, rose abruptly to depart. As Armida retired, she asked if her song had caused his sudden dejection.

"The mermaid," said Connal, "always sings sweetest before a storm."

She believed these words to allude to the secret he was to disclose at their next meeting; and though she conceived that her wealth and rank would obviate all this dreaded secret could menace, yet these ominous words sank into her heart.

During the journey home, the silence was unbroken by a single word. On her arrival at the castle, Armida flew to her apartment: delighted and disturbed, elated and trembling, she wished to taste

the luxury of passion alone. As she passed through her dressing-room, she caught a glimpse of her beautiful figure, sparkling less brightly with all her jewels than with love, hope, and triumph, and she felt that confidence revive that she never had known since she quitted Italy.

Every object around her appeared tinged with a fairy light: she approached the casement from which she had seen him the first night of her arrival, as if it was the confidant of her feelings, and opened it to inhale the same air she had breathed that night. She remembered she had seen him there, and she thought that her imagination, concentred as it was, had pictured to her the object with which it was filled. She looked again: a dark figure stood in the shadow of the tower, and a voice, hollow and deep, unlike the voice of passion, pronounced her name.

"Who is there?" said Armida: "who calls on my name?"

"A restless and wandering spirit,"

answered the voice: "Armida, the burthen of my heart can no longer be borne: grant me a last request, and listen to me."

"A last request!" repeated Armida, faintly.

"The rushing of the tide drowns your voice," said Connal: "there is a flight of steps from that tower to the rock: come down, and listen to me."

Armida paused a moment; all was still in the castle, and she descended the steps, and, lightly dressed as she was, stood trembling on the rock beside him. The sad and solemn hour, contrasted with the glow of their late meeting, embellished by luxury and passion, struck her imagination like an omen, and in spite of all the confidence she felt in her own power, she approached anxious and dejected.

"Is this the man," said she, "over whom my smiles and frowns have such power? Is this he who but an hour past called me the arbitress of his fate?"

"No, I am one who can yield no longer to the intoxication of sense or of fancy; a few hours must dissolve the illusion, and precipitate the disclosure that fixes my destiny."

"Why hours?" said Armida, trembling: "oh! tell it now! What is this mystery that I dread without knowing it?"

"Is it a mystery," said Connal, in a broken voice, "that I am ruined? the last of a fallen race, on whose single head the accumulated evils of past ages have fallen, who, stunned by the crash, is looking round, not how to escape, but how to perish with dignity."

Armida, ignorant of life and its difficulties, scarce comprehended him, and she said timidly:

"I have no experience; alas! I know nothing of life but splendour and luxury. Is there no path to distinction for talents and birth like your's?"

"None: I know no art: I have no

profession, no means of subsistence: 'I am a Milesian, proud of blood, and haughty of heart as any of those whose pride has made me a mendicant, yet I would lay hold on the plough, or the oar: I would toil away my iron frame, my swelling heart, till they became a clod of the valley, could I earn bread by tilling it."

He stopped, but Armida, breathless with emotion, attempted in vain to speak, and he went on with the voice of one who forces himself to confession:

"Why should I hide it—I have tilled the earth for bread. I told my grandfather I was going on a pilgrimage, but I went where I believed my person was unknown to offer myself as a day-labourer. My appearance promised strength, and I was employed to dig the ground that should have been mine: I worked hard." He continued, his breath growing thick: "There was a ruffianly overseer there who oppressed a poor sickly

lad, who worked to maintain an aged parent: always he abused, often he struck this poor wretch. I told him I was willing to undertake his labour and my own: from that moment he persecuted him with more malevolence than ever. Once as he raised his whip at him, I rushed on him, and wrested it from his hand: foaming with rage he caught it up, and aimed a blow at me: yes, I felt his lash curl round my body: the fire of hell boiled in my veins: I seized the reptile, and rushed with him to the brink of a river. Heaven saved me from murder: I could have crushed his life out with my single hand, but the screams and terror of the wretch made me feel him so despicable that my passion was gone in a moment; I threw him from me alive, and quitted the spot and the attempt for ever."

Armida's feelings rising rapidly to a swell of agony, forbade utterance, and he added in a deeper tone, and with many a pause;

"My last, my only resource is to fly to some country where the labour of my hands may procure me bread without insult, and without dependence, where not one single chord of my heart will vibrate to the tone of birth, or hopes, or country more. For this I have been long preparing, for this I am now prepared: in a few days the last of the Milesian race quits the country for ever."

At these tremendous words Armida's resolution forsook her: her pride, her dignity, were all forgot, and wildly exclaiming:

"Must you go then! Take me with you, Connal!" she fell convulsed, but not senseless, into his arms.

He clasped, he almost crushed her to his burning heart.

"Armida! angel! you follow a ruined wretch to distant countries! you bear the change of climate, the hardships of want! you ——"

Still delirious, and believing he was

flying from her that moment, she struggled to hold him with her cold, convulsed hands, wildly repeating:

"Then you believe all they told you falsely of me: it is not true. My early days were passed in pride and luxury; I was a vain, proud girl, but I am no longer so: it was all false and affected, I can endure difficulty and want: I will be your faithful, humble mate," she cried, with increasing agony.

Wild as herself, Connal knelt beside her on the cold ground, now strewed with her sparkling ornaments: her head rested on his bursting heart; his tears dropped fast on her cold cheek. Never in the pride of beauty was she so lovely, never in the intoxicating moment of splendour was she so dear: she lay on his bosom pale as a dying rose, whom no dews can revive.

"Armida, my glorious flower! that came from the south, burning with beauty, the child of the sun! and must you

wither in the cold bosom of one who cannot love?"

"Is this the hope with which we parted? Is this the light that shed rapture on our last brilliant hour?" cried Armida. "Oh, why," she exclaimed, tearing off her ornaments in despair, "why do I wear this splendour, like a victim, attired for sacrifice? Alas! does it become a wretch who supplicates for life?"

Her hair dishevelled, her gaudy dress soiled and torn by the rock she knelt on, she stretched out her arms to him:

"Connal! Connal! by these tears, by this despair—alas! I have nothing else to plead with: I have no brilliancy, no talents, no charms now. These fragments are the emblem of my situation: you have torn away the flowers from life, and crushed them in the dust like these."

Gasping and speechless, Connal gazed on her.

"This sight makes me a monster," he murmured. "Armida, spurn me, hate me, bid me begone: where is your pride, Armida?"

"Alas! when I have sacrificed all the dignity of my character and sex, why should I spare my pride, why should I spare a few fruitless words? On my knees I have implored you: the proud Armida, whose heart no human power has ever touched before, has knelt to you. What can I do more?"

"Then I will stay," said Connal, with dreadful resolution: "I will stay and perish before your eyes."

"But I have wealth enough," said Armida.

"I am bound to brave and faithful men: I will desert them: I will stay, and be a villain."

"I have wealth enough for all," again repeated Armida.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Connal, in the proud torture of his heart, "I must

feed on the spoil of the first of human hearts: I would sooner," he cried, stamping with fury, "I would sooner, like wretches in a wreck, gnaw the flesh off these strong arms than suffer them to fall idly by my side, while a woman fed the descendant of Irish kings."

"Go then," said Armida: "I am unable to contend: my knees are weary, my struggles are over. Go, burdened with my death, but never, never with my reproaches!"

A noise, like that of an opening casement, reached their ears at this moment. Armida started, for she saw it was in Wandesford's apartment, and she adjured Connal to quit her instantly.

"And leave you exposed to his insult," said Connal, indignantly.

"Oh, no, no; begone: it is your presence can expose me to insult. I can reach my apartment in a moment.

Begone, if you value my peace or fame."

Connal disappeared in a moment, and Armida returned to her apartment with all the speed terror allowed her, and extinguishing the lights, she stood watching at the casement.

In a few moments Wandesford, who had been obliged to find his way through the passages of the castle, appeared below her window. He looked round intently, and then, appearing to catch some distant object, pursued it eagerly, and was out of sight in a few minutes.

Armida, trembling for the fate of her lover, could support the terror of solitude no longer: she hurried into Rosine's apartment, and, waking her, briefly told the events of the night, and her present terror.

Rosine, throwing on her morning dress, followed her, and they remained

watching at the casement till the setting moon deprived them of light. No object had appeared, no sound was heard: all was stillness, solitude, and fear.

CHAP. III.

The harp that once through Tara's halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
As if that soul were dead.
MOORE.

ARMIDA, starting from her late and feverish slumber the next day, saw Rosine standing at her bed-side. She had at first determined not to appear that day; but yielding to Rosine's remonstrances, she rose, and descended to the apartment where the family usually assembled.

Her mother, who was there alone, addressed her with her usual suavity, and seemed quite unconscious of the events of the preceding night, and of her having exposed her partiality for Connal to a crowded assembly: but to Armida this silence was more oppressive than reproach

or menace, and though she tried to imitate her mother's self-command, she shook at every sound, and listened every moment in the hope of hearing Wandesford's name mentioned. At length, to conceal her fluctuating complexion, she took up a book; but she had hardly done so when Wandesford entered the room, his dishevelled appearance proclaiming that he had not past the night at home.

He did not notice Armida; spoke slightly to Rosine; but addressing Lady Montclare with unusual solemnity, desired a few moments private audience with her.

Lady Montclare, trembling, but externally calm, rose to grant it, and Armida and Rosine were left alone aghast.

Their suspense did not last long, for Wandesford, returning in a few moments, and solemnly approaching Armida, said—

"Miss Fitzalban, will you honour me with your attention for a few moments?"

Rosine was now quitting the room, when he called aloud—" Miss St. Austin, let me request you to stay, and be a witness of my conference with your friend.

" Miss Fitzalban, I demand whether my addresses to you were not sanctioned by the approbation of your late father?"

Armida, who had laid aside her book, but had not ventured to raise her eyes from the ground, bowed assentingly.

" Were they not also honoured with your own?"

With some hesitation she bowed again.

" May I demand then, (as I am justified by your extraordinary conduct last night,) may I demand on what pretence is that approbation now withdrawn?"

" On no pretence, sir," said Armida, now darting the full fire of her eyes on him: " on the ground of facts, which it

would be alike injurious to your honour and to my feelings to allude to."

"I understand you," said Wandesford, his expression darkening with rage and shame: "but I have no time to waste on the despicable subject you hint at: I demand are you ready to abide by the engagement you entered into on quitting England?"

"Your own conscience, sir, may spare the question, or may answer it for me."

"I demand your answer," said Wandesford. "Are you ready to abide by your engagement, and unite yourself to me?"

"Never! never! Neither force, or art, or importunity, shall compel me to fulfil an engagement from which your own depravity has fully absolved me."

"This is your resolution?" said Wandesford, speaking calmly, but trembling with stifled fury.

"It is," answered Armida, attempting to quit the room, "and I call heaven to witness it."

"Then I call heaven and hell to witness mine," said Wandesford, in a voice of thunder. "Proud woman," he continued, fiercely grasping her arm, "within twelve hours you shall bewail it in tears and in blood." He rushed from the room.

Armida sat still in despair; and even Rosine, terrified by these incessant scenes of passion, lost all her resolution, and expressed her fears for Connal's safety.

"And do you think, said Armida, animated by the spirit of her lover, "do you think Connal dreads the anger of living man?"

"Why are you then terrified?" said Rosine.

"Oh! I cannot bear that any one should tremble for him but myself."

A short and fearful consultation was then held, and they determined to send

Desmond to warn Connal of his danger, for Armida too well knew his sanguinary and vindictive heart to doubt of his employing the darkest means he dared. But Desmond was not to be found in the castle, and Mr. O'Morven or the priest she dared not trust, for both appeared devoted to her mother.

The day was passed therefore in an agony of suspense, which the silence of Lady Montclare rendered insupportable.

At dinner-time she slightly observed that Wandesford would not return to the castle for some days, and Armida, who listened as a criminal would to a respite, determined herself to go in quest of Connal in the evening, as her mother never assumed the least authority, or even hazarded an inquiry after her movements.

The evening was dark and gloomy; the autumn was far advanced, and the shore, the rocks, and the heathy hills, wrapped

in mist, resembled the ocean in their unvarying expanse and their tints of shadeless grey.

Armida, accompanied by Rosine, traversed the shore where they had so often met. He was not there. She approached the cavern; but the waves dashing against it prevented her entrance; and at length, more terrified by his absence than by the gloom and rudeness of the scene, she entered on the bare heath that divided Connal's ruinous mansion from the castle.

At the extremity of it she saw him approaching, and all her fears were forgot in the contemplation of his figure as he towered along like one of the heroes of his native bards, around him heath and rock, above him mist and storm; and her passion exalted by her imagination, she felt that to such a being she dared not mention that she trembled for his safety a moment before.

He did not observe the emotion she betrayed; but his face, suffused with a

glow that made the scene like summer to Armida, he whispered,

"Love has made me superstitious. A thought wilder than a dream crossed my mind this evening."

Armida listened with pleasure to the confession of weakness, for she wished for an excuse for her own.

"The old harper," said Connal, "who still follows our ruined fortunes, has touched my imagination deeply. Amid the night of age, and want, and blindness, a spark of poetic fire burns in his soul. Ill-fated man! he touches his harp in empty halls, and wastes on the ear of age sounds that might have roused heroes to battle.

He played for me this evening; but the martial airs I loved to hear wearied me, and I asked him for airs of passion, which his memory, long a stranger to youth and love, had lost.

"O'Morven,' said the old man, dropping his harp, and stretching his ancient

hand towards me, 'you love! I need no eyes to see it. Your heart is no longer set on tales of woe or war: it is filled with woman's love.'

"He needed no eyes to understand the burning sigh that answered him: and he implored with such vivid and prophetic energy to hear her voice, that I yielded to his wild request, and even came out to seek you.

"Often," he continued, leading her onward, "when sitting on the grey stone, or by the mossy tree, the only memorials of the heroes of our house, he believes himself inspired, and imagines that the spirits of other days prompt the involuntary burst of song, in which he announces the fate of those who visit him.—He is waiting near us: come, and let us hear if his harp has one chord that vibrates hope or joy for us."

Armida silently placed her slender arm on his. There was something in this oracle of song that touched her imagina-

tion, for when labouring under the uncertainty of fate, the strongest mind will descend to the humblest resources.

He wrapped his mantle round Armida to shelter her from the damp, and as they moved slowly along the misty heath, Rosine thought she had never beheld forms so fair, so towering, so unearthly: their majestic motion, their paleness, their burning eyes that alone conversed, and the dim and shadowy air that fell on them, recalled to her fancy the tale of the Persian princes emerging from the palace of death to begin their flight to Paradise.

The scenery around had that pale and misty look that fancy too might believe the colour of that intermediate region where the bounds of the invisible world are mingled with those of life.

The old harper, seated on a grassy cavin beneath a tree, was waiting for them. His harp was beside him, and the rush of the wind through the leafless

branches above seemed like a prelude to its mournful and neglected tones.

Their steps gave no sound; but he turned his ear towards them with a quickness that proved his hearing compensated for the loss of sight.

Armida uttered an exclamation when she saw him, for his flowing dress, his long, white beard, his large, blue, sightless eyes, and his thin hair waving, like snow drifted by a wintry wind, presented to her sight a being she thought almost imaginary.

The old man's figure seemed illuminated by emotion at the sound of her voice, for he believed that he knew the figure, and even the character of the speaker from its tones.

He spoke eagerly to Connal in Irish, who as eagerly interpreted his words.

"Daughter of beauty!" he exclaimed in the impassioned language of his country, "the sound of your voice makes me bewail the loss of my sight again. Oh!

if my harp had but one string left, that one string should be alive with your praise."

He caught up his harp as he spoke; but, long accustomed to sounds of sorrow, he faltered in the attempt to revive those bright and delicate tones that the presence of youth and beauty suggested.

"Fair lady," said he timidly, "let me feel your soft hand: its touch will remind me of the time when my harp could reach the heart, and the fair maids loved its sound well: but none so fair came to listen when I could sing what was pleasant to the ears of lovers."

Armida placed her white fingers in his withered hand, and they looked like snow-drops springing from the brown soil of winter.

He again touched his harp, and Connal said with animated fondness,

"Give us Cormac, the sweetest song that ever was inspired by love and beauty.

At the moment the old man bent over his harp in a trance of feeling; a loud blast of wind swept across the strings, and the sound, deep and mournful, resembled a human groan as it passed along the heath.

The old man shuddered: he dropped the harp, and his sightless eyes rolled in their sockets with a force that seemed stronger than actual sight.

"The hand of the dead is on my harp!" he exclaimed: "there is a spirit in the air—the voices of other days strike my ear—there is a spirit in the air! I feel his touch on my heart! I see him though I am blind! O'Morven, he whispers, 'No song of youth or love!' O'Morven, he bids me sing of woe and death!"

Armida, trembling, grasped for support the arm on which she leaned.

"Heed him not," said Connal; "it is the wind that sweeps the strings of his harp"

"It is not the wind," said the old man; "it is not the wind that bids me utter these sounds."

And with the inspiration, the solemn fury of a prophet, he struck the chords that for centuries past had summoned the funeral procession to the grave of an O'Morven, and echoed the dreadful cry that was raised over the corse.

Connal, with all his firmness, tremblingly alive to national superstition, shuddered too. He led Armida away, and they crossed the heath in silence.

It was now dark, and Armida, whose mind, tinged by destiny and love, was assuming the gloomy colour of Connal's, felt herself unable to resist the oppression of this dreadful augury, and chilled and trembling, her frame weakened by her mind, she hardly suppressed the tears she did not dare to let him see.

As they approached the castle, starting from his trance, Connal implored her in subdued tones to meet him the following evening on the same spot.

"On the same spot!" repeated Armida, shrinking: "ah! do you forget

that spot has menaced us with woe and death!"

"The heart is above all omens," said Connal, passionately; "love is stronger than death."

As he flew along the heath to his lonely tower, he heard the sound of rapid steps pursuing him. He turned, and found himself clasped in the arms of some one who fell breathless on his neck.

"Is it you, Desmond?" he cried.

"No, no," answered a struggling voice: "I am all air, fire!—I am inspired! I am mad!—Stay, Connal, you shall not stir from this spot till I have told all, or I shall run wild with rapture."

Connal paused, and the rising moon revealed his dark and agitated features.

Desmond gazed on him for a moment.

"I will not speak," he cried, "I will not utter a word: you are not happy,

Connal, and I cannot bear to insult you with my joy."

Connal turned his full, dark eyes on him with an expression that at once thanked and repressed his vivid sensibility.

"I am not happy, my Desmond; but while you are so, I cannot be very wretched: but what is this itnelligence that has elated you?"

"What!—I cannot tell: I can hardly think.—Love, youth, beauty, woman! Connal."

"Woman!—What woman?"

"Why, Endymion: Endymion is a woman!" cried Desmond, delirious with joy. "I knew it; I never could be deceived: I knew it from the first I could not be the victim of an impossible passion.

"The old harper, Cormac—ten thousand blessings on the dear old dotard! I could kiss every hair in his white beard with more devotion than he kisses the re-

lics in the chapel. This morning he wandered to the castle, and got into the chapel, imagining there was service there, and wishing to hear its sounds once more within those walls. Lady Montclare and Morosini are in the habit of passing hours there, and as they are supposed to be employed in devotion, no one intrudes. They believed themselves alone, for the old man was kneeling in silent prayer in an obscure corner, and in their conference every thing transpired.

"Endymion is a female: Lady Montclare, banished from her husband because she brought him no son, determined to impose her on him for one: the priest was her agent, and by his artifices Lady Montclare delayed to introduce her to her father till on his death-bed, when he no longer discriminated her female figure. They spoke of the difficulty of carrying on the deception, and of their apprehension that Wandesford or my father might suspect her sex, unless the former was

conciliated by an union with Armida, and the latter by some expedient he could not distinguish. After remaining two hours discussing their plans, the execution of which had almost driven me mad, they went away without discovering him. It is all true, all certain," he continued, anxiously observing Connal's silence. "But on my knees I adjure you," and he knelt to his brother, "never, never to disclose it. Oh! think of Endymion." Connal was silent. "We are the rightful heirs," said Desmond; "but Wandesford, that hateful Wandesford; he has wealth and power: he would dispute our claims, and our lives might be exhausted before his opposition." Connal was silent still. "And Armida too," continued Desmond: "her proud heart would sink with the shame of her father and her family."

Connal with sudden emotion raised his brother, and vowed he would perish before he disclosed the secret.

"And look here, Connal, look at this delicious paper; but recently it was put into my hand: it is from her: how delightful it is to say *her*: she invites me, invites me to meet her this night: no, I will not read it; it contains words sacred to my eyes, to my heart: there is no name, but I have thought of a name for her already, the sweetest, the softest ever borne by her sex; yet still I love the name of Endymion: I shall love it for ever."

Connal, his cheek crimsoned with resentment and shame, emphatically pronounced the name of Desmond.

"Oh! I know all you ought to say; I see even in the dark, the frightful face of virtue you have put on: but I am no demi-god; I leave heroism to you: imagine my situation—imagine yourself eighteen, in love, and me———"

"It is a subject I must not trust imagination with, nor must you: Desmond, this is not a time for trifling,

the deluded writer of those lines that have intoxicated you is unconscious of her sex."

"But she will not long be so," interrupted Desmond.

"Libertine!" exclaimed Connal.

"Ah! Connal, have you no mercy; does nature and passion plead to you in vain? Is this the heart of a brother? For months past I have never closed my burning eyes: my nights were without sleep, and my days passed in a dream of fever. I am worn to a shadow: I am dying of passion. Connal, have you no mercy: would you dash the drop of water from the lip of a feverish wretch who must drink or die?"

"Yes, if it poisoned him, and his recovered life would bless me for it."

"And would you reject it, if Armida's hand held out the drop of refreshment to you?"

"Oh! mention not her sacred name," cried Connal, with proud indignation,

"with lips polluted by a guilty passion."

"Guilty!" repeated Desmond.

"Yes, guilty: what is the object; what is the hope with which you seek her? Ah! Desmond, that guilt that hides itself even from imagination is the first that presents itself to opportunity."

"My heart is at this moment as pure as your own," cried Desmond, proudly; "I will but clasp her to it; I will but tell her it beats for her."

"You will press her to that heart?" said Connal, placing his hand to his brother's bosom, whose audible pulsation had struck him in every pause of speech. "Then you are undone, and she will be undone; she whom you love. Desmond, I would rather see you lie on this cold heath all night beside me, than let you go to this guilty meeting."

"Connal, you grow too hot; you tyrannize over me: you are too much

the elder brother: you are but five years older than me, and yet you imagine me a boy: by what force do you pretend to detain me?"

"By this," said Connal, and he bent his proud knee to his brother, and attempted to seize his hand.

"Begone!" said Desmond, who felt it necessary to force himself to passion. "I despise the humility that only masks an usurped power."

"Despise me if you will, to-morrow you will thank me."

"Never: my whole life and happiness have been sacrificed to your influence: I have worshipped you like a deity, and you have ruled me like one; but the reign of your violence was short: it ends to-night."

"If to save you from vice and passion was a crime, I am ready to bear your reproaches."

"I have nó time to waste on you. I

fly to happiness: I leave you to gloom, and solitude, and virtue."

"Oh, Desmond!" said Connal, his eyes fast filling with tears at this unnatural reproach. He choaked the struggling emotion, and grasping his brother's hands, said firmly:—

"You shall not go."

"Shall not!" said Desmond, fiercely struggling with him. In the contention, Connal, who could not hurt him, released his arm suddenly, and the recoil struck him on the lips with such force, that they were instantly bathed in blood.

"Desmond, thus bleeding from your hand, thus more than lacerated by your words, you are still my brother; still the boy whom I love so well. Oh! let not this night say how vainly—I will not be provoked, but I will not be resisted."

"You will not be provoked!" said Desmond, madly: "then take that."

And he struck him.

"Desmond," said his brother, starting from him, to shun the temptation that trembled in every nerve, "at this moment a single blow of this hand could dash your baby-frame in splinters. Go in safety; but go not to shame and danger: to-morrow you will weep on my neck."

"Never: I renounce all connexion, all intercourse with you. I abjure you; I abhor you: tyrant and no brother."

And he flew with the speed of lightning from the heath, for he dared not trust himself with another tone of Connal's voice.

"Cruel boy; return, return—even to-morrow; return no longer innocent, but even repentant, and my arms shall be open to you again: reject my advice, spurn my intreaties; but if you renounce my affection you are lost."

Desmond was gone: he took refuge in flight from the reproaches of his heart,

and redoubled his speed to escape the tones that recalled them so loudly and bitterly.

Disastrous love, violated friendship, and hopeless fortune, rushing together on the mind of Connal, for a moment overbore its firmness. He threw himself on the heath, and hiding his face in his mantle, wept. The night grew stormy: the wind scattered his dark locks: the rain beat on his bare breast: better accustomed to the elements than to man or woman, he felt their rough greeting like that of a friend, and refreshed and strengthened by what would have sent half of his sex shrinking to shelter, he spread his arms to catch the blast that cooled his burning breast and throbbing head. It was already past midnight, when the sound of horsemen galloping over the heath struck his ear: he turned: the party passed him, and in a few moments the castle gates were thrown open, and by the light of the torch which

the porter bore he saw Wandesford and his servants alight and enter. The gate remained open, and soon another figure rushed out. Connal saw its distracted movements: it approached: the moon fell strongly on it. Connal's heart beat strongly: it was Desmond: he threw himself on the ground, and his deep groans struck on the heart of Connal.

A spark of passion burned there for a moment: in a moment it was extinguished, and he rushed to his brother.

"Desmond, you are unhappy, and you are no longer guilty in my eyes."

The wretched boy clung to the cold ground: he heard his brother, but he dared not meet his injured eye: he shrunk from his upbraiding touch.

"Desmond, Desmond, dearer to my heart than ever; if unfortunate, even if guilty, still too dear: speak to me; rise from the earth; rise and tell me is that unhappy girl still innocent."

"More innocent than I dare utter."

Sobbing with emotion, burning with gratitude, Connal snatched his brother from the earth, and held him to his heart.

"Am I clasped in these arms again," cried Desmond, agonized with contrition, "the arms I flew from; the heart I trampled on?"

"It was a moment of madness, Desmond; perhaps I did not deal mildly with you: we will both forget it: at this moment I forget every thing but that you are innocent."

"Oh! no, no—I was as guilty as I could be: that letter was not from her, it was from———"

"From whom?" cried Connal.

"Ask me not to disclose her name," said Desmond, while the moonlight, pale as it was, shewed his young cheek dyed in crimson. "I will never utter it; I will never encounter her sight; never sleep under her roof again. Connal, can you shelter me for one night: I will

never enter those guilty walls more. There sleeps the innocent object of my love," he continued with a burst of anguish, "sleeps without a thought of the wretch whose heart is breaking for having even in imagination doubted her purity: yet, oh! yet, that she knew the consolation that I feel in the thought that she is so pure."

He dried his hot tears, and convulsively tore himself from the view of the castle.

"Connal, can you shelter me for one night; had they not turned me out, I would never have entered the den of that sorceress more: but now I have no home but this heath—no shelter but these rocks; let me rest my burning head any where this night, and I will quit this place to-morrow for ever."

Connal seemed to pause at this request, but recollecting himself, he bid his brother follow him, and led the way towards the cavern. Desmond, exhaust-

ed by emotion, and unable to contend with the storm that raged on the bleak shore, threw his arm over Connal's shoulder as they walked.

"Is this," said he, shrinking, "the support I am worthy of; is this the posture I should assume: oh! no—on my knees I should have supplicated before I dared even to approach you."

"For shame, for shame, Desmond, are we not brothers?"

"Yet you knelt to me," said Desmond, tortured by his very penitence.

"I knelt to heaven when you were gone, and my prayers were heard; you were preserved from guilt."

They reached the cavern: the tide was out; and darkness and silence formed an awful contrast to the agitated passions of the intruders.

"Here you will be safe," said Connal, in a voice of such chilling solemnity as seemed inspired by the genius of the place: "but I must leave you for a few

moments to discover how long you may remain here."

Desmond listened to the sound of his receding steps, till fancy was wearied in following their track, and he wished even for their echo to relieve the intolerable loneliness of the place.

An hour elapsed before he returned, and silently led his brother to a recess where some art seemed to have been employed to form a resemblance to a domestic apartment. The roughness of the rocky walls had been removed: a turf fire burned in a niche: there were books and lights on a rustic table. Desmond gazed around him, and Connal, as if to anticipate inquiry, demanded the events of the evening.

"The moment I discovered my danger," said Desmond, blushing, "I flew from the spot; she called, she tried to detain me. Oh! Connal, I cannot dwell upon that guilty, that horrible moment.

"Though the object was revolting to

me, yet so inflamed were my passions, so subverted my reason and principles, that I felt had Endymion been there—Oh! Connal, you were revenged that moment: I knelt on the ground, and uttered a solemn vow never more to endanger Endymion's peace by my presence.

"I have little merit for this resolution. It is impossible after the discovery of this night that I should ever again appear at the castle; but as if every demon of hell had conspired to drive me mad to-night, as I was rushing out my father met me, and—oh! Connal, how shall I utter it—commanded me never to see you more."

"My father!" repeated Connal, in amazement.

"Yes, I was too distracted to attend to what he said, but he talked of some offence you had given to his friend Colonel Wandesford."

"His friend! a man that has treated him before my face with an insolence that made the blood boil in my veins.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Connal, traversing the cave with rapid steps, and seeming to commune with some phantom in his mind: "can it then be possible; can Wandesford be such a monster: Wandesford, whose life last night lay at my mercy, and whose life I saved."

Again he importuned Desmond to repeat the subject of his conference with his father, and Desmond, shrinking again, repeated his unnatural injunctions.

Connal silently continued to walk up and down the cave.

"My dear Desmond," said he, at length, "I am not able to speak to you to-night. There is your bed of moss: it is all I have to offer you. Sleep there, my Desmond, and may no thoughts visit your dreams like those which take away rest from me."

Desmond threw himself on his rustic bed, and though too much agitated to

sleep, willingly closed his aching and feverish eyes.

"He sleeps," said Connal, bending over him a few moments after: "how calm and heavenly is the sleep of youth! He is happy, for he knows but one passion: no bloody and mortal summons will wake him to the strife of life and death, of honour and shame. Desmond, those bright hairs will never be soiled with the dust of a scaffold; that young form never will meet the gaze, and rage, and curses of a rabble. Oh! there is a blessing even in evil, when it does not reach to those we love."

He then threw himself against the side of the cave, and hiding his face with his hand, remained silent. In a few moments Desmond heard him quit the cave, and by the sound discovered he was descending a flight of steps. A murmur of voices then struck his ear: they were sometimes loud, and at times winding

among the echoes of the vault, Desmond imagined he was deceived by the wild and indefinite sounds of the wind. Restless with many emotions, he rose, he listened, he examined the cavern: in one corner he observed a cavity; the light of the half-extinguished fire fell dimly on it, disclosing a flight of steps which Desmond for a moment was about to descend. As he paused irresolutely, the sounds ceased, and the last flash of light falling on the cavity, rendered it impossible for Desmond to penetrate its depth: he retreated, and his weariness both of body and mind overcoming his curiosity, he again threw himself on his bed of moss. Frequently his slumbers were broken by the sound of voices from beneath, and more than once he thought by the clash of arms.

When he awoke, the beams of morning had broke through the cavern, and Connal was sitting beside him in an attitude that shewed he had not slept all

night. Fevered, bewildered, and unrefreshed, he rose, and hastened to the entrance of the cave to cool his parched lips with the air of day. The morning, cold, calm, and grey, after the storm of night, resembled that sullen repose which the mind feels after the conflict of passion.

"What is your present plan?" said Connal, as they stood at the entrance of the cave.

"My only object last night," said Desmond, "was to fly from this place; but I am now resolved to join my regiment: its quarters are but a few miles off, and the hurry of a military life may benumb my feelings; perhaps some welcome summons may terminate my life before it is further embittered or disgraced by a passion that I cannot resist, that I cannot even contend with."

Connal, with the eloquence and the benignity of a ministering angel, tried to sooth and strengthen him in vain. The parting hour arrived; and wildly calling

on the name of Endymion, he stretched his arms, his eyes, his heart, towards the castle, mingling vows of everlasting fondness with resolutions of instant departure, yet still delaying his departure to repeat the vow.

"Go, Desmond," said his brother, trembling for his stability; "go, while your resolution is yet a virtue: in a few hours it may be impelled by necessity, and then it will be virtue no longer. Go, and remember, whether tempted to weakness, or summoned to danger, you are an Irishman, and an O'Morven: however it may please heaven to dispose of your fortunes or your feelings, may your honour at least be immortal."

A crimson flush tinged the wan cheek of Desmond, as he listened to his brother.

"I have nothing of value to give you, my Desmond; but had I all the treasures of the earth I give you more in this little volume. (He drew it from his bosom as he spoke.) The words of worldly wis-

dom are vain, and those of worldly pride vainer still: but in the conflict of passion should you ever ask of your conscience the question—Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? it contains the answer—even by ruling himself after this word."

CHAP. V.

Yet cold in the dust at thy feet I would rather be,
Than wed what I loved not, or turn one thought
from thee.

MOORE.

THE following day gave Armida an interval for reflexion. Connal's image appeared involved in a darkness she could not penetrate: his gloomy irresolution, his vicissitudes of passion and melancholy, his flying from her while he almost worshipped, and his deferring the disclosure from night to night, while he called her the arbitress of his fate, made her tremble at this mysterious character, while she longed to develope, and dreaded the resolution which she had employed all her powers to precipitate. The day was marked by no event: Wandesford left

the castle in the morning, and this stillness increased the agitation of Armida. Wearied by that intolerable effort which confines us to society from which our hearts are worlds away, Armida thought the evening prolonged for ages. At length Lady Montclare retired, and Armida alone hurried to the spot where Connal was to meet her.

It was almost dark: the clouds of an autumnal evening mingled their grey and heavy masses with the dark ocean, a bleak wind swept along the rocks, and the sigh of the moss and the thistle as it bowed their heads, with the distant shriek of the sea-bird, were the only sounds that reminded her of life as she traversed the shore. Alone, pale and shrinking from the chill and cheerless air, how different was she now from her who hitherto respired only the brilliant and balmy air of the south, whom even their genial wind had never been suffered to visit too roughly, and whose steps had only pressed the

perfumed and velvet path of luxury. Insensible to the gloom that gathered round her, she continued to walk, in vain straining her eyes to discover through the mist a glimpse of Connal's figure. Night came on, but the agitation of her heart prevented her perceiving it: that form which could make midnight noon still hovered in her imagination, though her eyes could not discover him; and the increasing darkness, by excluding every external object, only concentred her mind's eye on the object which filled it.

A step was heard on the heath: she started and turned, and almost before she saw him, Connal grasped her in his arms. Dark as it was, she saw with terror his distracted figure, his bare, dishevelled head, and his features, in which the sublimest expression of character contended with despair.

Her heart told her this was no meeting of love, and she in vain tried to collect voice to speak to him.

"A moment! but a moment!" cried Connal, "is allowed me to bless you, and to part."

"Oh, what is this!" cried the trembling Armida: "give me time to comprehend this terror."

"I had no time given me: treachery and hatred have destroyed me: my fate is no longer doubtful: this moment I am called to decide it by my own arm. Armida, the mercy that heaven has denied me visit you a thousand-fold—farewel!"

"Oh! do not bless me with that horrible voice," cried Armida: "stay but to tell me what is this new danger? What ——"

"There is no danger," said Connal, with a dreadful smile; "but fly before you see me perish at your feet; fly, for my arm can no longer guide or defend you."

Armida's reason failed her: she tore her hair, her shrieks echoed along the

shore, she clung to his knees; yet unable to hold them, she sunk on the ground at his feet.

"Oh, God!" cried Connal, throwing to heaven his strained and blood-shot eyes, "let me but bear this like a man; let me not meet my foes bereft of all strength."

"Oh! leave me not to die here," cried Armida, writhing at his feet in her ravings; "a single blow will end my misery, and yet you delay, and yet you leave me to die: your hands are strong, and yet you have not the mercy to end me."

Connal, beside himself, knelt on the ground: he attempted to raise her, but at that moment the alarm-bell rung out, and the discharge of musketry burst on his ear like thunder. He started, and through the darkness of the night he saw the flames bursting from the old tower, and spreading their burning volumes on the air.

"It blazes, it blazes," he cried in agony: "he is perishing in the flames, and I stand here fondly talking to a woman."

He tore himself from her, and she sunk on the earth.

Rosine, undismayed by the danger and terror of the night, had gone out in quest of Armida. The mist that had gathered over the heath, and the roar of the sea as it lashed the rocks, concealed every object, and drowned every effort of her voice to make herself heard.

Drenched by the rain, and breathless from struggling with the wind, she continued her dreary progress alone till the flames that issued from the burning tower, glaring widely on the dark heath, shewed something white stretched before her on the ground. She hastened forward: it was Armida, pale, motionless, and prostrate.

Struck to the soul at beholding this woman once so celebrated, and still pos-

sessing every distinction of rank, genius, and beauty, in a situation so helpless and deplorable, Rosine, almost execrating Connal, knelt beside her, and attempted to raise and revive her.

Armida recognized her voice. She recovered, and her mind overcoming her weakness, her recollection returned in a moment with her reason.

"Is this terrible dream over?" said she, with a ghastly smile; "I know you—you are Rosine: but where is Connal?"

Rosine exerted all her strength to raise and lead her from the spot, for the noise came nearer, and she could distinctly see the troops approaching by the light of the burning tower.

But all her intreaties were answered by the inquiry—"Where is Connal?"

Rosine then trembling, confessed what she had heard—that an insurrection had broke out, military law had been proclaimed, and troops had marched that evening to search the tower in which the

O'Morvens lived for concealed arms, on the information of Wandesford; and pointing to the burning ruins which the soldiers were now quitting, she implored Armida to fly from this scene of violence, before insult or danger reached them. Of all she said, Armida appeared to retain but one sentence.

Ignorant of the distracted state of Ireland, she did not comprehend the rest; her heart had room but for one image— "And Wandesford leads the soldiers!" she cried—"Wandesford!"

"Oh! come," cried the terrified Rosine, "come, while we can escape with safety: this is no place for unprotected women: come, or I shall not have courage to stay with you."

Armida attempted to follow her, but before they reached the castle, her eyes caught a glimpse of the flames that sunk for a moment as the roof fell in with a horrid crash, and then rose in erect and livid spires, triumphing over the ruin.

She darted from Rosine, for her disturbed imagination presented to her the image of Connal engaged in a conflict with numbers who overpowered him.

"My hand and fortune," she cried, grovelling on the earth in delirious agony: "my hand and fortune to the meanest wretch who will save his life; and no one," she cried, after a pause, "no one hears, and no one will accept me; and yet they told me I was rich and beautiful; but all they told me in my youth was false, or why am I thus deserted now?"

Rosine, unable to contend with or to support her, flew to the castle for assistance, and she was at length conveyed to her apartment.

The castle and the whole country were now in a state of alarm. The report was universal that a rebellion had broke out, of which Connal was one of the principal leaders. The troops who had marched from the town where they were quartered

were now dispersed over the country searching for arms, and taking up suspected persons.

The alarm-bell of the castle rung all night, and was loudly answered by that from Lady Kilcarrick's mansion, which they could distinctly see illuminated as a beacon to the neighbourhood: the wretched inhabitants of the few cottages in the neighbourhood came flying for protection to the castle, which was now fortified as if for a siege; the draw-bridge drawn up, the windows secured, all the servants whom they could depend on armed for defence, and the family retreated to the most remote and best defended parts of the building. Lady Montclare and the priest retired trembling to the chapel, but the elder O'Morven, with something of the spirit of his family, presided at the directions given for the security of the castle, and attempted to tranquillize the family by assurances of safety.

Some of the attendants who were posted on the turrets of the castle about midnight exclaimed that they saw the king's troops scattering the rebel forces in every direction, that the tower was in ashes, and scarce a man was now to be seen on the heath. Apprehensive that the rebels in their retreat might assault the castle, the guards were doubled on every side, all the lights in the front of the building extinguished, and every preparation made on that side of the castle which was assailable from the heath: the other sides, surrounded by rocks, were impregnable to forces who wanted artillery. A few moments after an express from Wandesford arrived at the castle. He was admitted with caution, and darkened with blood, and smoke, and toil, he presented a frightful picture of the conflict to the inhabitants of the castle, who crowded around him. His first intelligence removed their fears: he announced that on

the tower where the O'Morvens lived being invested by Wandesford's regiment, a formidable body of rebels, well armed and disciplined, had appeared to defend it, but as their efforts were more directed to preserve the building than to assail the troops, they had been quickly routed, and the tower reduced to ashes. Rallying at some distance, under the conduct of an unknown leader, they had made a vigorous defence, and though half of them had been cut to pieces, and the remainder wounded, by the steady and well-directed fire of the soldiers, yet by the skilful conduct and supernatural courage of their leader, they had succeeded in securing their retreat to the recesses of a wild mountain, at the distance of two miles, from which it was impossible for the forces that had pursued to dislodge them. Here, therefore, they had paused for the night, after sending expresses in every direction for assistance, of which one,

taking the castle in his way, had stopped for a few moments to announce that their immediate danger was removed.

Rosine, who, with the trembling inhabitants of the castle, had hurried to the hall to hear the report of the express, at once comprehended the dreadful mystery of Connal's character, and not less dismayed, even for the awful events of the night than for that of Armida's ill-fated passion, she hastened to her apartment before the precipitation of some terrified domestic should disclose the intelligence.

She found Armida, though unable to quit her bed, and though every attempt to speak was convulsive, yet resolutely determined to listen and to inquire into every particular of that dreadful night.

Her total ignorance of the state of Ireland, a country of which she had never thought till she became an inmate of it, made her slow in comprehending what Rosine told her. At length she seemed to understand it all, and hiding her face,

she sunk back on the bed in silence. Rosine tried to give her the hope she wanted herself, by intimating that this unknown leader might perhaps be some stranger.

Armida shook her head incredulously: "Ah! that super-human courage," said she, "can belong to but one man on earth. Oh!" she added after a pause, "Oh! that I had beheld him on the dark mountain's side, when he gathered his broken band, and told the proud tide of pursuit—hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.

"And I shall see him," she murmured, "I shall see him there."

"Armida," cried Rosine, believing her again delirious, "what can you mean by those words?"

"To follow him," said Armida, speaking with difficulty, but with perfect decision, to follow this fugitive, this outcast, this rebel to the mountain, to the end of the earth."

Rosine long expecting this fatal resolution, heard it now without surprise, but not without grief and horror: "Oh! Armida," she cried, bursting into tears, "how can you, nursed in pomp and luxury, talk of following the desperate fortunes of a rebel leader: the wind of heaven was not suffered to visit you roughly in your youth, and how will you bear the storm in its fury?"

"Rosine," said Armida, faintly but resolutely, "do not weep for me, I am past the kindness of friends: let me be forgotten by the world, I shall never embellish it more. I am no longer the ambitious sparkling female who lived only to the world and to fame: I am a woman overcome by passion and destiny: I am embarked in a wreck, yet I do not cast one look toward the shore."

Rosine continued to weep and to supplicate, but Armida interrupted her.

"I have nothing now to require of you, Rosine, but secrecy: perhaps

your principles may oppose this; you may think it your duty to betray me, but I warn you it will be in vain: I do not want resolution, and I cannot want the means to execute it long: alas! I feel I am strong only in despair; had life any charms for me I should value it more."

During the remainder of the night she was frequently and alarmingly ill, but at every interval of ease she recurred to her purpose, and spoke of it with a calmness, that while it removed Rosine's apprehensions for her reason, awoke others even more dreadful.

Almost as soon as it was light she rose, and with incredible exertions prepared to meet the family, who had none of them been in bed all night; and now assembled, at the first dawn of morning, were anxiously waiting the arrival of an express from Wandesford.

The danger and terror of their present situation seemed to concentre all their different and opposite feelings into one

mass of gloom and apprehension. Little was said except by O'Morven, who, equally regardless of the fate of one son, and the absence of the other, seemed, like all his countrymen, to feel his spirits raised by the approach of danger, and displayed that mixture of spirit and unfeelingness that is common to them all.

The day was past in wandering silently from room to room, viewing the country from the casements in the turrets, which being beyond the reach of assault, were not secured; in vain exploring the bleak and empty heath for the sight of the military party they expected to be quartered in the castle for its defenee, and at times listening to the heavy roll of the waves, whose sound they imagined the discharge of distant artillery.

Evening at length arrived, doubling the terrors of which she who felt the most had spoken the least, when the arrival of a party of soldiers was announced

by the servants who were stationed on the turrets of the castle: the intelligence they brought removed their immediate fears, though they represented the disturbance as much more serious than was at first imagined.

The rebels had in the night broke from their retreat in the mountains, and attacking the troops that pursued them, repulsed them with considerable loss: a strong detachment, commanded by a general officer, had marched that morning from Galway against them, and Wandesford's party, who had suffered so severely in the engagement and pursuit, were returning to their former quarters in the neighbourhood. He himself had been slightly wounded, and purposed if his presence was not necessary at the scene of action to return to the castle and make that his quarters for a few days. Intelligence had been sent to Dublin to apprise government of the state of the country, and troops were marching in

every direction to their assistance; but they had not yet been able to discover that any disturbance had existed in the adjacent counties, or that there was any connexion between this and the rebellion of 1798. It seemed like Emmet's insurrection, the isolated and hopeless attempt of a single enthusiast.

Orders had just been given on the admission of the soldiers to secure the castle for the night, and O'Morven and Morosini were gone to inspect its execution, when a carriage was heard driving rapidly into the court, and in a moment Lady Kilcarrick rushed into the room in an agony of distress. In this hour of terror, the sight of distress produced instant sympathy, and though every one disliked her, they all gathered round her with expressions of concern.

"Oh! Lady Montclare," she exclaimed, "my child, my Gabriella: oh! that villain, that monster; he has torn her from me, dragged her away to shame and ruin,

carried her off to those wild horrid mountains, to live with ruffians and rebels, and with himself, the worst of them all."

"Whom do you speak of?" cried Lady Montclare with unfeigned amazement.

"Whom! why Connal O'Morven; he has seduced my child; taken her from me: my Gabriella—my child, whose rank and beauty and accomplishments might have entitled her to the first families in Ireland: oh! the honour and comfort of my age is gone; I am ruined and undone for ever: oh! that he had the mercy to kill me before he had done this. I hope I may live to see him on the highest gibbet in the country, like a rebel and a villain as he is. As old as I am, I hope to see that day, and so I will ere long, if grief does not kill me."

Lady Montclare, whom even danger could not divest of art, loudly joined in her lamentations and invectives, while Rosine, thunder-struck at this intelligence, of which it was impossible to doubt, sat

bereft for some moments of all reflexion, and when at length she raised her eyes to look for relief on those around her, she perceived Armida had quitted the room without uttering a word. She rose mechanically to follow her, yet when she reached the door, she retreated and sat down in that sick and hopeless state of mind in which we seem no longer to know good from evil, in which characters change before us like figures in a dream, and the landmarks of life appear to be removed from their places.

She was startled from her reverie by the sound of Armida's steps—she then ventured to enter: Armida was walking up and down the room rapidly but silently: her step was firm, and but that her hair hung loosely on her shoulders, there was not even a trace of emotion in her figure.

In a few moments she was astonished to see her approach a glass, calmly arrange her hair, and throwing on her

veil, advance to the door: then Rosine ventured to inquire where she was going.

"The air of this room oppresses me," said Armida, evidently speaking with difficulty, "and I think I can only breathe in the open air."

The passages of the castle that opened on the sea-shore had not been secured like the rest, for in that direction no danger was apprehended, and they reached the rocky terrace, where Armida so often walked without observation.

Rosine, as they walked along, placed herself instinctively on the side next the sea; and though it was twilight, she saw Armida's haughty smile of contempt at this involuntary movement. The night advanced; it became dark and cold; and the spray of the sea reached them, wetting their light garments at every step; yet Armida continued to walk till it was totally dark, and then, as if she had waited for it, she hastily traversed that

side of the terrace, and descending, entered on the heath.

Rosine, now forced by her fears to speak, mentioned the intelligence of the day, and the probability that some stragglers from the rebel camp might be in the neighbourhood.

Armida walked on swiftly, without appearing to hear, but at length she said :—

"What were you saying of the rebel forces?"

Rosine mentioned the loss they had sustained, and the strong party ordered against them.

"Their leader is bold and brave," said Armida, "but conscience will subdue the boldest."

And she continued to proceed so swiftly that Rosine could hardly keep pace with her.

As they passed the ruins of the tower, which were nearly a mile from the castle,

no longer able to suppress her terrors, she exclaimed :—

"Good Heaven! Armida, where are you going? or what is it you purpose to do? Alone at night, and in a country like this, what will become of us should we meet with danger?"

"We are so wretched," said Armida, with a soul-drawn sigh, "that no one will injure us."

"Do you know where we are?" said Rosine, as she tottered through the fragments of the tower: "here has been death but a few hours past. Do you see the darkness? do you hear the storm? and yet this is nothing to what we may meet."

"There is no difference between day and night to me, between storm and calm," said Armida; "it is all the same, or will be soon."

"Oh! Armida, I can follow you no longer; this frightful language terrifies

me more than even night and our forlorn situation. Oh! Armida, before you leave me dying with terror, think where you are going, and what is it you purpose."

"I know not where I am going or what I intend," said Armida, pausing, and wringing her hands in the extreme of suffering: "if my strength does not fail me, I will hear my doom from his own lips. A last appeal to his heart, even if it should end in my death, will be better than thus dying by inches away from him, and listening to reports that tear me to pieces like demons. Perhaps when he sees me he will not deny compassion to the dying hour of the woman he has destroyed."

She still continued to hurry onward, and Rosine now followed implicitly, terrified to proceed, yet more terrified to return alone: she felt as if Armida's fate at last governed her's.

As they passed the ruins of the tower,

the moon broke faintly through the clouds, tinting its grey fragments with a sepulchral light, and revealing the long track of bleak and barren heath that lay before them.

As they hastened on, with a speed far above the strength of either, they beheld the mossy stones and the withered ash-tree under which but two nights before Armida remembered her fate had been announced by the aged harper. This sight overcame her, and tottering towards it she sunk on the stones, and supported her head against the trunk of the tree.

"Alas!" she cried, "is this the first omen of my disastrous journey. Here woe and death were announced to me, and my heart verifies the prediction. Ah! with what hope can a woman support herself who goes to revive passion that never felt, or soon forgot it. These stones are not more cold than his heart, these branches are not more withered

than mine. How different was I even the last sad night I was on this spot: then the gloomy prediction I heard terrified me, but it did not destroy all self-confidence, nor did it make me doubt him. How vast is the interval between even our worst fears, and the actual burthen of evil when it arrives."

Rosine, though weeping too, seized this moment of calm to represent the danger, the terror, and the desperation of her present enterprize; the improbability of meeting the leader of a rebel army amid inaccessible mountains, and the still greater, that amid scenes of tumult and horror such as he was now involved in he would listen to or feel for her.

"Ah!" said Armida, her voice growing fainter and her cheek paler at every word, "that is all I wish for; let me hear my fate from his own lips if he can pronounce it: perhaps he will be spared even that trouble, if the old man's pro-

phecy should be true: if I perish here," she added, leaning her cold cheek on Rosine's breast, "let it be told that life and fortune courted me in vain, for my heart was on the dark hill's side with Connal."

So shrunk was her form, so broken her voice, that Rosine believed her actually dying, and in her terror screamed aloud for assistance, though conscious none was near.

Yet affrighted as she was, her terrors were increased by the sound of approaching footsteps, and she would have given the world to be again left to the solitude she dreaded so much a moment before.

The steps approached slowly, but distinctly, and she now attempted to rouse Armida, and if possible excite her to escape, or conceal themselves from those who were passing the heath.

It was too late: two figures visibly approached, but there was nothing menacing in their attitude: it was a man and

woman; his arm was thrown soothingly around her, and she leaned on him with an air of softness and submission: they advanced: the light of the moon fell strongly on their figures. The man was Connal, the woman Gabriella. They were conversing in a low voice, but of their conversation nothing could be heard but the tenderness of tone and expression in which it was murmured.

They passed near the spot, but Armida and Rosine were in the shade; and as they crossed the heath near this desolate pair, they seemed like spirits going to bliss, whose bright journey leads them for an instant near the abode of final woe.

The steady light discovered them but too plainly to the wretched Armida: under the impulse of despair she stretched out her arms to him; she tried to call on his name in tones that would have pierced his soul, but she had no voice; a deep sigh, like that preceding dissolu-

tion, burst from her heart, and she sunk into the arms of Rosine.

"Was that a vision we saw?" she cried, after a long pause, raising her eyes fearfully to Rosine. "And am I here," she cried, "wandering like an outcast, alone at night, hazarding reputation and life for a man who leaves me to perish." She stretched her arm with wild emotion towards Connal.

"I would have knelt at your feet, I would have died at them," she cried; "but I shall save you the guilt of spurning me. May you never know the heart you have rejected. Alas! you will know too soon her whom you have preferred."

As they returned to the castle, a number of lights and a crowd of soldiers and domestics at the gate announced the return of Wandesford.

Armida, now well acquainted with the windings of the rocks, pursued another direction, and in the tumult that

accompanied the arrival of Wandesford they reached her apartment without discovery.

She eagerly threw off her wet garments, and Rosine saw with astonishment that she even took some pains to arrange her dress and her dishevelled hair: she dreaded some new convulsion of passion, and followed her, unable to speak, to the apartment were the family, even at this late hour, had gathered round Wandesford, to listen at last to authentic intelligence.

At Armida's appearance he bowed slightly and continued his conversation, which was principally addressed to Lady Montclare.

He described the force and astonishing efforts of the rebels; spoke moderately of his own conduct; but appeared to think that the danger, though remote, was by no means over.

The scenes in which he had been engaged had excited his spirit, which was

naturally daring, and the consciousness of his own distinguished conduct gave a degree of dignity to his manner, for nothing exalts a man so much in the presence of women as the knowledge that his character for courage has preceded him.

Lady Montclare, who heard with horror that the rebels had entrenched themselves in the mountains, and that the country would probably continue disturbed for the remainder of the winter, as their inaccessible situation completely defied military force, now tremblingly inquired if it were possible for them to be safer in Galway, or any town where a military force was stationed, during the winter.

"It is my advice," said Wandesford, "that your ladyship and the family should immediately quit the castle, and fix your residence in Galway or Loughrea, as in this remote castle you will be exposed to the incursions of the rebels.

I will undertake for your safe conduct to any place where you may fix your residence. I can still undertake for your protection: once," he added, "I had hoped to urge a more tender claim, but that I must now endeavour to forget."

Every one was silent; but Armida, collecting all her strength to meet this crisis of her fate, said faintly:—

"Do you then wish to forget it?"

The haughty soul of Wandesford could not resist the triumph of this moment, and he answered:—

"At least I wish to forget the competitor for whom I was dismissed."

"Oh! mention not his name," said Armida, with an impulse she could not resist, "if you would have me listen to you."

"I will forget him as willingly as you," said Wandesford; "I will forget every thing but the hopes those delicious words revive. Armida, what am I to understand from them?"

"If you are willing to understand me," said Armida, in vain forcing her features to assume a sickly and heart-forbidden smile of encouragement, "I have said enough, and if you are not I have said too much."—

She held out her shrinking hand to him, and Wandesford, seizing it, began to pour forth the most rapturous acknowledgments; yet, even at this moment, the hand of the first of her sex did not give him such pleasure as the triumph of his proud and vindictive heart announced over the man he hated.

"Oh, spare me," cried Armida, breaking from him, "spare me; I cannot bear this; I do not deserve it; it is not in my nature to deceive: if you can accept of an alienated heart it is your's; your generosity has already taught it gratitude, and time may teach it esteem, and even give it peace."

Unequal to any further effort, she

retired to her apartment, but Wandesford, in spite of his fatigue and his wounds, continued to sit and consult with Lady Montclare for the remainder of the night.

CHAP. VI.

"She pined in thought,
And sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief."

For some days Wandesford supported the character of an assiduous and happy lover, but his pride could wear the mask no longer. The artless complacency with which Armida received his attentions irritated him the more, as it left no room for complaint, and the consciousness of not being loved is that sensation of all others which makes us the most anxious to seek for the evidence of what we fear.

Letters now arrived from England, from his mother and his uncle, Sir Edgar Etheling Wandesford (the oldest and proudest baronet in England), intreating

him immediately to quit Ireland, and solemnize his marriage at the old family seat in England.

Lady Montclare eagerly pressed him to comply with their advice, mentioning that Endymion and she would fix their residence in Galway for the winter, and Rosine might accompany Armida to England. Wandesford, whose regiment was now off duty, and who was anxious to convey Armida from Ireland as soon as possible, embraced the proposal, and it was settled that they should quit the castle the moment they could with safety.

Armida was present at their conference: she listened to every thing, assented to every thing, and heard or understood nothing. Her mind, fixed on the one great effort of making the sacrifice that approached with silent dignity, had no room for its details; and if she had a wish at this moment, it was to be away from Ireland, for every express brought accounts of the heroism with which the

rebel leader kept his little band together, in the centre of a bleak mountain, amid winter, famine, and the foe; of the conduct with which he had hitherto repelled the approach of disciplined troops; and of the humanity with which, amid all his hardships, he protected the peasantry from the aggressions of his fierce and mutinous forces.

Winter had approached with unusual severity, and all its gloom seemed concentrated in the castle.—The inquietude of Lady Montclare became daily more obvious, and at length declaring that the severity of the season must preclude all danger on the part of the insurgents, she announced her resolution of quitting the castle the following week, and pressed Wandesford to fix his departure on the same day. Wandesford, who had protracted his stay only with the hope of torturing Armida with Connal's fate, was obliged to comply. Servants were dispatched to clear the roads, which were

almost impassable from the snow, and a party of Wandesford's regiment was appointed to escort them.

But during this interval of preparation, like Satan, knowing his time was short, his rage and malignity were increased tenfold, and Armida's resolution was hourly tried to the utmost.

On one of those melancholy days, while Rosine and she were sitting together enjoying the dreary consolation of silence, he broke into the room, and taking out a letter he had just received, began to read aloud an exaggerated account of the sufferings of the rebels, with a sanguinary denunciation against Connal, containing a copy of the reward offered for his apprehension. Armida, on whom he fixed his eyes with savage triumph, grew pale, but did not utter a word; but Rosine, whose spirit was roused by this unmanly persecution, said indignantly, "Are you a man?"

"Yes," replied Wandesford, with a

brutal oath, " and a man that will not be governed by a woman that defies either their art to defeat, or their insolence to disturb him."

Rosine, not trusting herself with the answer that rose to her lips, quitted the room, and Armida was about to follow her, till hearing the rude laugh with which Wandesford was pursuing her retreat, she calmly resumed her seat.

" Is this your resolution; is this the self-command with which you flattered yourself and me?" said Wandesford, striding up and down the room to work himself into a passion. " You cannot contain your emotion at that ruffian's name: instead of execrating him you are at this moment ready to weep, and nothing but your infernal pride restrains your tears. What hope can I have of the confidence, what security for the honour of a woman thus debased by passion?"

" Mention not honour or confidence," said Armida, struggling with her emo-

tion; "you have violated both. I could not expect sensibility from you, but I have at least deserved respect: I had no reserve: I exposed my heart to you—I laid it at your feet—I did not conceal its weakness or its wounds; and you have trampled on it, and stabbed it."

"The hearts of your whole sex," said Wandesford, furiously, "are not worth the earth I tread: you have no heart: you have nothing but pride, caprice, and desire. While the first men in Europe were at your feet you spurned them. My honourable addresses, the addresses of a man of the first family, fortune, and character were despised; but the moment you saw this Irishman, this heir of the poverty, and pride, and infamy of his country, you rushed into his arms, though he dashed you from them. Perhaps his figure awoke your classical taste, and you wished to transfer your study, like the statuary of old, from marble to flesh."

Armida was indignantly retiring, but he detained her by force. "Mark me! by Heaven, I am not lamenting the discovery of your worthlessness!—no, I rejoice in it; but I will make such use of it as will effectually secure my honour, and your repentance, if not your reformation. I will watch your very soul: I will sift your every word; I will be an Argus on your conduct, and an interpreter of your very eyes."

"Hold, sir!" said Armida, with a look that awed and silenced even him, "and let me remind you of your only security, my own honour: at this moment it enables me to despise your menaces, as at every future one it will to defy them."

He relinquished the arm he had rudely seized, and walked sullenly away, ashamed of the conviction it had forced on him.

"But let me warn you, Colonel Wandesford," she continued, leaning on her seat to support her trembling frame, "that, unless you intend to defeat your

own power, you will not again thus venture to abuse it."

"What!" said Wandesford, starting at her last words, "do you then intend to retreat from your engagements?"

"Oh, no!" said Armida, smiling with high disdain: "Oh, no, thou honourable lover! I will fulfil the bond: my person and fortune will be your's: you shall bear about this wretched, faded figure, in all the heartless pageantry of splendid misery; but take care that even before your victim is bound she does not escape."

"And who can take you from me now?" said Wandesford, with a mixture of rancour and fear.

"There is a hand even stronger than your's: I think while I am speaking to you I feel it on my heart: its touch warns me that my present sufferings will last me all my life, but will not last too long."

She retired to her apartment, which she

did not quit till the night preceding that fixed for their departure for England. During the interval, Rosine frequently entered her apartment, and always found her employed in writing: she never spoke, or even raised her head; and Rosine retired silently as she entered.

But on that evening, after having made her own brief preparation for the journey, unable to bear the still and ominous gloom of her apartment, and the silence of the castle, only broken by the half-heard step of a hurrying domestic, she went at a late hour to Armida's apartment: she found her in a travelling dress, and prepared to sit up all night, as the carriages were to be ready in a few hours. A large packet lay on the table before her: she looked at it for some time, and then said calmly, "Take those papers, my dear Rosine: let them meet no eye but your's. It is no superstition that dictates to me this journey will be my last: once I had hoped that admiration,

not pity, would have accompanied my departure from life. Alas! I now feel that nothing but my sufferings will survive me."

Rosine took the papers; but on her return to her apartment she found it impossible to retire to sleep. The castle clock had struck two; at six their dreary journey was to commence. The snow that drifted against the casements obscured all view from them; and the hollow sweeping of the wintry wind making her thoughts every moment more gloomy, she revived her dying fire, and sat down to examine the papers that lay on her table. Yet often as the storm beat strongly against the walls, and imagination formed other sounds within her desolate chamber, she dropped the papers, and mentally exclaimed—"Is this the prepation for a bridal journey!"

Armida's thoughts since the departure of Connal.

"These are the last lines I shall probably write, and there is but one human eye they will ever meet: thus the last efforts of a mind once destined to celebrity will be lost, like itself, in oblivion; and this consideration presses on my mind even at the moment when I believed but one thought could reach or move it. How much was expected from me!—how much was bestowed on me!—and how little have I done.

"The grave where he lies could not more effectually convict my poor father of the vanity of his fondness than if he could behold his darling Armida now."

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"Alas! how different are the impressions we receive from imagination and passion. Educated in a celestial climate, where every object excited the mind and senses, my young and ardent mind re-

flected every image presented to it brighter than the original: every effort I made to express my sensations increased them; the images multiplied, the language coloured and kindled as I spoke, and the praises I received won the race for me before it was concluded. But now my imagination is gone: an object without dimensions and without colour seems to occupy my mind's eye: I want strength to conceive the extent of my misery: when I would speak of it, I have no words; when I would paint it, the picture is black, and a voice from the bottom of my heart tells me death alone can penetrate or express the depth of feeling there."

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"Any one that remembered me would advise me to apply to my former resources, and tell me that one like me could never want means to occupy his mind and time. Alas! I feel that a common mind would not feel half my wretchedness.

Calypso, when she was deserted, felt the consciousness of her immortality and genius a curse—and the eternal verdure of her isle was a reproach to the desolation of her heart."

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"I may say in the language of the Eastern fable—I am a ruined building, and he is the architect."

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Alas! had this sacrifice been made for him, with what triumph would I have sunk into obscurity, with what delight would I have given up my talents, as the deities are said to put off the rays that surround them when they stoop to a favoured mortal. But when we make a sacrifice without consolation and without praise, our own hearts begin to doubt their motives, and the exertion of the sublimest energy, wanting its honour, almost loses its reality."

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"That luxury of the imagination and

senses, to which I was accustomed, has long ceased, and I resign it without a murmur, but not without life can I resign the luxuries of passion and the heart."

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"Even at this moment of desolation I cannot envy Gabriella: she could not have won him by any thing that had alliance with the passions of the heart, or greatness of mind: I could not stoop to her art even for him: I never employed the art of woman, I had no occasion for it, but if I had a superior mind, how wretchedly has it been appreciated. Often in my own heart I read my epitaph, as if it was inscribed by an invisible: she whom he left to perish deserved him better than she whom he preferred.—But, alas! the place to which his perfidy is hurrying me fast annihilates pride as well as love."

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"How often in the day I think I hear

the sound of his voice: how often I watch for his light and rapid step, and when I turn and see only vacancy——"

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"A lingering of my former character has made me wish even in these pages to produce something worthy of myself: impossible! the passion that takes away our minds takes away language too, and denies us the relief that ordinary distress extorts by its very clamour."

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"It consoles me that his crime was committed against me alone, and I forgive him.

"To me his image still appears in that dazzling and cruel perfection, that seems to throw the blame of desertion from him, and makes me accuse myself instead of him.

"Ah! what are his talents and virtues to me: what avails it to me that his name will one day set the page of history on fire, if it only speaks death

to me. He is gone to make a new era in the history of man, and who will pause in writing the story to tell that he left the woman that loved him to perish. The storm that fertilizes a country crushes the rose and violet into dust."

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"My sufferings are great, for there is no commiseration for them; no one pities the victim of sensibility and passion.

"Every one can commiserate the ordinary calamities of life, because they are within the reach of ordinary conceptions, but is it ever in the power of circumstances to make us as wretched as our own hearts can.

"I am still young and wealthy, and therefore the world will laugh, and tell me I must be happy.

"Alas! were I old, indigent, and destitute, I should perhaps meet with

compassion; but should I so certainly die of a broken heart."

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"Sometimes I wish to balance my sufferings by the pleasure his image once gave me; but I cannot: in vain I sit for hours trying to recall it: of the innumerable graces of his figure I have not at times the slightest recollection — chance, not thought, restores them to me, and I repeat to myself the name of Connal a thousand times a day, without a distinct idea annexed to the name."

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"Gracious heaven! how could he thus drive to despair the woman that loved him as I did; is he really depraved and unfeeling, or am I with all my talents and passion unable even to inspire pity. Alas! it is the fate of woman always to do too much or too little; perhaps the powers I was so anxious to display

wearied and disgusted him: men of the most powerful minds, it is said, admire females of a contrary character; but did he not see it was love, not vanity, that prompted me, and that my talents were displayed not to demand homage, but to offer it."

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"I have a sensation in my inmost heart like a burning thirst, incessant and intolerable; but the water to quench it can no where be found on earth."

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"When I lie down at night, my imagination, even in sleep, is tinged with the gloom of that scenery in which I first beheld him: I dream of heath and moor, of ruins and moonlight; my feet stumble on the dark mountains, and when I awake, I am further than ever from him."

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"I wish that night I went in quest of

him I had been carried dying into his presence, that he might have said :—— 'She is not what she was when I beheld her first.''

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"My fate is hard: many complain of difficulties in life, which their prudence or their resolution might remove: how could I have contended with circumstances.

"The world, its events, and its characters, were as dust beneath my feet. But his heart is changed; his heart is turned against me: in those few words my destiny is written as with a pen of adamant; I am bound with a chain whose corrosions prey on my heart like vultures, whose iron enters the soul. His heart is changed, and what remains for me. I am so out of charity with myself, that I no longer wonder no one loves me."

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"My wretchedness sometimes forces

me to look abroad, and observe a fate similar to my own.—When a woman ceases to love, she ceases to love the whole world; no pursuit can interest, no human being can please her.

"Man has enough to do in life; he can embroil himself in its tumults; he can forget himself in its pleasures; but woman, born for passion, if she ceases to love ceases to live.

"Love to man is like a flower that he steps out of his path for a moment to gather: he is pleased with it; he gazes on its beauty; he inhales its fragrance, and flings it away to wither. But woman, like the Persian Peri, feeds on its odorous essence, and feeds on it alone, or dies.

"Yes, I feel it; all that agitates or embellishes life is over with me; nothing disturbs, nothing touches, nothing awakes me: like the ancient cities of Italy, the burning tide of passion and despair has

passed over me, and art and genius, the picture, the song, and the landscape, sleep below for ever."

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"My talents are gone, the impulse that pride and flattery once gave them was worn away by repetition.

"Passion succeeded, and—oh! how brilliant and eternal seems that light with which genius irradiates the new world of love. In his presence, I could have been all that has been fancied of a muse or a grace. But he is gone, and I am nothing; like the children of Israel, on their march from Egypt, he has taken the jewels of silver and of gold, and left the first-born of my heart dead within me."

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"The bitterest conviction that can come to the heart of woman reached mine. A younger and a fairer than me has won him:—alas! what can I oppose to nature and to youth, to the

vivid and celestial bloom of eighteen, warm with the first light of passion: whatever graces I possessed were intellectual; it was taste, it was imagination, that gave expression to my figure.

"And when her bloom is fled, what will she retain. But what can be more fugitive than the boasted powers of mind: will the glow of her form be as soon lost as that of my mind? A younger and fairer than me has won him, and though every deserted woman may complain like me, yet my destiny seems strange, it seems to unfold a new page in human suffering, though I have but to add my name to that of myriads, who have traced it like me with a dying hand."

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"As great as my sufferings are, I dread still more the moment when they shall cease, when I shall think of him no more."

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At this moment Rosine, who had often paused to weep, heard the voice of Wandesford, and in a few moments the hurrying steps of servants announced their approaching departure.

She concealed the papers, and hurried to Armida's apartment, who, standing silently amid her attendants, appeared to witness the preparations as she would those for her approaching death.

Lady Montclare now entered, and after a cold embrace, and an unanswered inquiry for the unfortunate Endymion, who did not appear, they descended to the hall: Wandesford was waiting with loud impatience for them.

As Rosine crossed the immense gothic hall, the darkness, the dim lights, and the looks of the half-awakened servants, faintly appearing in its wide extent, seemed to her to resemble a funeral procession to a vault.

Shuddering with cold and terror, she placed herself in the carriage: the roads

had been cleared, and attended by a strong party, their gloomy journey was performed in safety and silence, and about noon they arrived at Loughrea.

CHAP. VII.

How far is't called to Fores. What are these
So withered and so wild in their attire.

SHAKESPEARE.

ON their arrival at Loughrea, Wandesford learned that Banagher was but twenty miles further, and that when they reached it they would be out of Connaught; and in spite of a tremendous snow-storm, and the remonstrances of the people at the inn, he determined to press forward and reach it if possible before evening. Armida and Rosine made no resistance. The soldiers were dismissed, as the part of the country they had now to travel through was perfectly tranquil, and after a slight refreshment, they again set off about two, menaced on every side by the state

of the elements and of the country. The sun set: the country was one bleak expanse of snow, intersected by tracts of bog, to which the unfrozen water gave a dusky hue; and the sky, livid and lowering with the pallid gloom of winter, seemed to denounce all its terrors against the travellers. Armida, throwing herself back in the carriage, and covering her face with her handkerchief, kept a profound silence; and Wandesford appeared to be asleep. Rosine, left to herself, involuntarily threw her eyes on the dim prospect around her, and better acquainted with the country than either of her fellow-travellers, she soon discovered that it was not the road to Leinster they were passing, as that would long since have led them through Killimer and Eyrecourt.

With difficulty she roused Wandesford, and made him comprehend that the driver must have mistaken the road. Wandesford, with a peal of oaths, stop-

ping the carriage, demanded of the man where he was: he at first persisted that he was right, and that they were now near Banagher, but after a short examination of the country, he confessed he had lost the track; and blaming Wandesford for forcing him to pursue the journey at such an hour, and in such weather, refused to proceed further without information. Rosine, during the debate, examined the country still more closely, and in spite of the darkness, discovered with horror that they were in the very part of it which was infested by rebels; this discovery she did not communicate, but her silence only increased her fears. The driver, urged by Wandesford's execrations, proceeded a few yards further; but the horses then suddenly stopped, and he declared that their restiveness proceeded from their intuitive sense of some danger, which the darkness of the night prevented him from discovering. Wandesford, now compell-

ed to exert some degree of reflection, ordered the carriage which followed with Armida's female attendants to precede them cautiously, and in a few minutes they learned the dreadful necessity of the precaution. A horrible crash, accompanied by the plunging of the drowning horses, and the screams of the unfortunate women, compelled them to stop.

Wandesford, unwilling to encounter the inclemency of the night, still urged the driver on, and slowly the half-frozen horses dragged on a few steps further, and heavily the carriage followed through the deep roads, sinking up to the nave of the wheels at every step; till Armida and Rosine, terrified at the fate of the unfortunate women, and trembling for their own, insisted on quitting the carriage, and seeking some shelter even on foot. They alighted, and called aloud on the sufferers: no voice answered them: the shrill wind bore their voices far away,

and the outriders, half-blinded by the snow, and frozen almost to their saddles, could give them no information: they had seen the carriage suddenly disappear: they had heard the cry of those within it, but they knew no more.

The horror that sat on every countenance was rendered more ghastly by the light that played over the horizon. There was no moon; but the quick and vivid coruscations of the sky, revealing nothing but snow and heath, seemed to appear only to mock their terrors. During a long interval of their disappearance, Rosine discovered a light at a vast distance, whose dim but steady ray was soon distinguished by the rest of the party; and thither they determined to turn their course, and if possible to procure assistance for their unfortunate attendants, and shelter for themselves.

The servants again mounting their horses, proceeded cautiously; and Armida and Rosine followed in the car-

riage, till the inequalities of the road, never intended for the passage of vehicles, compelled them again to quit it, and sometimes supported by, but oftener shrinking from the oaths and impatience of Wandesford, they attempted to follow the direction of the light.

With incredible difficulty they at length reached a large desolate building, which stood without office or improvement near it, alone on the heath. The light disappeared as they approached it, and their loud applications for admission produced nothing but their own echo. At length a voice from within inquired their business: they demanded admission and shelter for the night, and were told there was no accommodation within; that it was a deserted house, inhabited only by an occasional tenant, and in the disturbed state of the country the inmates were afraid to admit travellers at that unseasonable hour. Wandesford, in a fury, commanded the servants to break

open the door; and the people within, apparently terrified by his violence, after a muttering consultation between themselves consented to admit them: the light re-appeared, and the harsh and grating bars of the door were slowly withdrawn.

A man and woman stood at the door: famine, want, and wickedness, were painted in the most lurid colours on their faces, and the miserable blue light they held darkened the expression while it revealed it. The features of the man were rendered wilder by a grim smile, as he viewed the figure of Armida, and her superb, though soiled dress.

The party hurried through the large damp hall, and, uninvited, entered an apartment, which, though little less dreary, was illuminated by an immense turf fire burning on the hearth. Their grim hosts gave them no welcome; and even while reviving their chilled limbs at the fire, they stared round them with

terror at the damp, dripping walls, the broken floor, the black ceiling, and the vast, shapeless, creaking blocks that seemed not to have been put to the use of chairs, for half a century since they were made. Some brown bread and whiskey were on the table, of which, after a long silence, they were sullenly invited to partake, and on their refusal, the people, who seemed to think all claim on their attention was over, lounged gloomily against the window, surveying their guests with looks of murky inquietude, which they tenfold returned with looks of dismay.

Rosine, as one of the jarring doors moved behind her with every blast that howled round the house, caught a view of a number of arms deposited in the next room: she had resolution enough to conceal a discovery that she felt could do no good, but she felt her terror intolerable from that moment.

After a sullen pause, the man turned

to the window as if to examine the weather, and then with his back turned to them, said: "There will be a moon in less than an hour, and you had better pursue your journey."

"We don't know where to go," said Wandesford as sullenly, "and considering the little accommodation we trouble you for, you can afford to spare it somewhat longer."

"If you do not like it," said the man, "the sooner you quit it the better."

The woman gave him a look, as much as to say, we had better keep them as long as we can; but he repelled her by an angry motion, and Rosine, astonished at a degree of inhospitality from which the poorest Irish cottager would have revolted, could not reconcile it with the apparent poverty of the people, and the liberal compensation they might expect from the appearance and equipage of the travellers.

The servants, who had found a shed for the carriage and horses, now returned to request a light and some assistance to discover the rest of the party, and the man went muttering with them.

The woman remained: the same dead and chilling silence continued. Armida leaned exhausted on the shoulder of Rosine, and Wandesford strode up and down the room, grumbling curses between his closed teeth.

Heavy steps were now heard approaching the room, and two men suddenly entered it, who starting at the sight of the strangers, retired to the other end of the room: the woman spoke to them in Irish, but they did not seem to heed her, and conversed together in whispers. As Wandesford crossed the room, his eye suddenly caught theirs: he started, and stifling an exclamation that seemed to partake of hatred and terror, he threw himself in his chair, and spread his hand-

kerchief over his face. One of the men then rose, and placed himself opposite Wandesford, as if determined to meet his look; and Wandesford, who felt from his steps he was near him, seemed forced by some invisible power to raise himself and meet his eye. The man grinned and nodded at him with horrid significance, and Rosine, roused by this extraordinary scene, observed with terror their countenances thus fixed on each other, glaring with the paleness of malignity and fear. Unable any longer to bear her fears alone, she touched Armida, who raised her head, and they interchanged looks of alarm, but they had no time for conjectural terror, for the other man rising, they both seized Wandesford, and with loud curses, they attempted to drag him from the room.

Wandesford struggled with his utmost strength, uttering the most dreadful cries for assistance, vainly echoed by Armida

and Rosine, who, screaming and mad with horror, expected to see him murdered before their eyes.

His strength encreased by despair, he resisted them at first, till the female fury held the lighted candle to his hands, with which he had grasped the table. He was then torn away: the woman followed, and Armida and Rosine, who had sunk on the floor together, were left alone. Gasping, almost senseless, and clinging to each other for the support which neither could give, they did not dare to raise their heads, to speak, or even to breathe for some minutes. A loud noise at the door roused them, and they recognised the voice of one of the servants demanding admittance.

"The door is locked," said Rosine; "I heard them fasten it as they went out."

"Try to escape by the window, my lady," said the man, in a voice of

terror: "I cannot assist you, and there is no good meant you here."

The terrified women examined the windows, but they found them all secured beyond their strength, and the man felt from their silence the trial was in vain.

"Ah!" cried Armida, sinking again on the ground, "Connal is not here to save us."

"Where is Colonel Wandesford?" said Rosine, almost afraid to listen to the answer.

"I saw them drag him from the house, my lady," said the man: "they said they would not do his business here."

"Gracious heaven!" cried Armida, "then they will murder him."

"Oh! Edward, if these people are banditti, tell them I have articles of value, tell them I have jewels in my possession: I will give them every thing; I will make them rich for life, if they will let us escape without insult and danger."

"Ah! my lady, they took care to find that out themselves," said the man, "for they are now busy plundering the carriage; but they said all their business was with Colonel Wandesford, and perhaps you have nothing to fear."

"Perhaps!" repeated Rosine, "oh! we have every thing to fear from such wretches: try, my good fellow, to make your escape from this dreadful place; I know we are not many miles from the castle; try to reach it, and send us assistance, before we die of terror here."

The man was going to reply, but he was repelled by the approach of some one, and in a few minutes the woman again entered the room. Hard as she was, she seemed touched by the sight of the desolate females, and she attempted to give them some comfort, but her words were contradicted by her voice and looks, that seemed only calculated to inspire disgust and dismay.'

She pressed the spirits on Armida,

and when they were rejected with horror, said calmly, " Poor thing, he was your sweetheart I suppose : well, don't fret, he is in good hands."

" Oh ! tell us only," said Rosine in earnest agony, " in what hands we are, or what is it we have to expect ; " and Armida, forgetting all her hatred for Wandesford, in the horrible contemplation of his murder, pleaded as earnestly for his life as if her own depended on its preservation ; but neither inquiry nor supplication could extort more than cold and coarse assurances that they were in safety and in good hands, that they had nothing to fear, and with a good fire and good whiskey to warm and comfort them, it was their own folly if they fretted for any thing : she then left them, adding she would tell them more to-morrow ; and wearied with terror and with conjectures on this mysterious adventure, they at length sunk into mute despair, and with eyes fixed on the dim windows waited

for day, in the prospect of which even the most hopeless feel a kind of indefinite security.

As the men dragged Wandesford from the house, they expressed no intention of immediate violence, but finding he still continued his struggles, they secured his arms with strong ropes, and placing him on a horse between them, they set off at full gallop.

The dreadful state of the weather and the country, and the weakness of their miserable horses, often threatened their lives during their perilous journey, which was pursued at full speed; and Wandesford, stupified by his struggles, his terrors, and his speed, resigned himself without speaking to his conductors.

At length they arrived at a river, and here Wandesford believed their progress must be checked, but the men seizing his reins, plunged in: their horses swam or rather floundered through the broken ice,

and drenched and chilled, and almost lifeless, they reached the opposite bank.

There was a dim and clouded moon, such as shews itself through the thick vapours of a snowy night, and Wandesford discovered on an eminence the ruins of an edifice that had once been sacred: the numerous narrow spires, the crosses on every pinnacle, and the vast eastern window, were faintly touched by that cold and shadowy light that seems to announce the habitations of the dead.

All round was bare, bleak, and desolate; but as they then approached, something like a watch-word was given, and echoed from the walls, and some figures were seen moving, and apparently armed, in the shadow of the building, and their forms, covered with snow from head to foot, strangely contrasted the dark and massive walls, and the deep silence that pervaded them.

Wandesford was led forward, and the

men left him in a room, which, when he examined, had some appearance of modern comfort. There were seats and a fire, and from its look it seemed to have been once the cell of the abbot.

He was roused by voices in the next room, into which the men had passed, and he heard them relating with wild exultation the prize they had seized.

He knew too well the cause of their hatred, and he shook with uncontrollable fear.

"What, is Wandesford in your hands!" said a voice whose tones froze his blood: "how, where, by what means?"

The men related that they had found him in a house of theirs, about two miles off, where they believed he had been by accident for shelter, and that he was travelling with his wife and another female.

"Leave me, leave me for a moment," said Connal in an agony of emotion: "I cannot speak to you now; but," calling af-

ter them, "touch him not at the peril of your lives: leave him to me alone."

Wandesford was now fully awake to his situation; and he collected the small remains of his mental dignity to meet it. He believed his death certain; and he felt, as most men destitute of religion and principle feel in their last hour, a sense of pride, a false but imposing substitute for both.

In a few moments a number of men entered the room, and silently ranging themselves round it, leaned on their arms with their eyes fixed on the ground.

Connal entered last, and stood amid his desperate band like the great angelic chief among the fallen host of inferior spirits, awed by his strength, dazzled by his brightness, and lost by his example.

Wandesford, rising, proudly stood opposite to him with his arms folded; but he could not lift up his eyes to that figure which still stood proudly eminent above that of all the sons of men.

"Wandesford," said Connal, in a voice which swelled to thunder as he spoke, "let this hour convince you how vain are human distinctions.

"You are a man of rank, and power, and character; I am a rebel, and an outcast from society; one whose life you might devote to public justice on any spot of England or Ireland but this wild heath alone. Yet you are in my power: a single word from me, and you are swept away from the living world: a breath of this hunted fugitive can scatter your birth and honours like dust before him. You are in my power, and I will make you feel it in every vein of your stubborn heart.

"Look on these men: you know their faces well: look on them and tremble at your crime! They are brave and faithful: they might have been useful and innocent.—What are they now.

"You shudder in dread of the depravity to which you yourself have forced

them. When they saw you first they owned their delusion: they flung those arms from their hands: they threw themselves on the mercy of government, and on your honour.

"Traitor! unworthy of the name of soldier! Cold-blooded, mean, and merciless betrayer! what is the reward of their generous submission, of their naked, unstipulating confidence?

"They are lost to their families and their children: they are without home and without country: they are hunted to the wilds like brutes: their blood is bought and sold! Yet, guilty as they (and they are guilty), with infamy around them, and death in their view, there is not one of them who cannot, laying his hand on his condemned breast, thank heaven he is not such as you.

"For myself, Wandesford, who twice saved your life, who held my naked breast between you and these men when their just and ominous fears demanded

your life, for me, I will not speak of myself, lest I should forget you are defenceless.

"I will not pollute my lips, rebel as I am, with your crimes any longer: I hasten to pronounce your sentence, for I am now your judge. Such mercy as you shewed me when I was in your power you may expect from me. You are deceived: I will be most exquisite in my vengeance.

"Go! begone! quit this place in safety and in infamy. The word of the man you have ruined is pledged for your safety: the hands of the men whom you have dipped in blood shall lead you hence.

"Begone! and to the last moment of your life remember the vengeance of O'Morven."

Wandesford, stunned and overwhelmed, scarce heard his last words; but the men did, and they murmured loudly, and struck their arms with that wild and inarticu-

late expression which supplies, and more than supplies the want of language among a ferocious and mutinous soldiery.

Connal rushed forward.

"Let none of you lay a finger on him. Who is your leader? Not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground!—He is her husband." He leaned trembling with agony against the wall. "I will cleave to the middle the first of you that touches him!—he is her husband!"

Wandesford saw his agony: he saw the thick drops stand on his quivering forehead: he saw him in vain drag his luxuriant hair over his cheek to hide his distracted features: he feasted on the sight; and neither honour nor gratitude could impel him to the discovery which at that moment he would have even sacrificed his life to conceal.

The murmurs of the party subsided, and they were leading Wandesford away, when Connal, who had recovered himself, exclaimed—

"Let him remain here to-night: let him have the best accommodation the circumstances he has reduced us to will allow.

"Colonel Wandesford," he added more sternly, "we trust you no more: you must be conducted blindfold from this ruin to-morrow.

"If we meet you in the field, y u will then be at my unshackled mercy: but tell your friends who arm against us that they fight against men, who will gnaw the roots of the earth for sustenance, who will bear this bleak season on their naked bodies, before they will sell those bodies at less than a life for every limb, or yield them to your gibbets while a soldier's hand remains to give them a soldier's death."

The next morning Wandesford was conducted in safety from the ruined abbey; and forgetting even Armida in his determinations of instant and dreadful vengeance, he set off with the utmost speed for the town where his regiment was quartered.

His proud heart could sooner have submitted to death than to owe his life again to Connal, and he indulged his passions, that they might stifle the reproaches of his conscience, and his trembling recollection of danger.

Armida and Rosine passed the night in speechless solitude.

The morning broke, and though they had longed for its light, they started, for they feared it would only discover new dangers.

About noon the woman entered; but her manner was now totally changed: she behaved with the utmost servility, and entreated them to take some refreshment, and to quit their dreary apartment as if they were at perfect liberty.

They followed her to a room which had been rendered as comfortable as any room in that dreary mansion could, and exhausted by fatigue, willingly partook of the refreshments which were heaped on the table; but neither inquiry nor sup-

plication could extort from her a hint that might intimate into whose hands they had fallen, why they were detained, or how they might be liberated.

"You will know all when the captain comes," was the answer; and when entreated to discover who this dreaded man might be, on whom their fate depended, she left them in silence.

Yet often she returned and shewed a solicitude for their accommodation, which they felt must be owing to another. Often too she shewed a wish to communicate more; but then starting at the slightest sound the wind produced in the passages of this desolate building, she hastily quitted them, as if fearful of discovery.

None of the servants who attended them appeared all day, nor could they trace from the windows the slightest prospect of assistance.

The country was covered with snow, on which no trace of human foot was

visible, no vestige of human habitation discernible; and they sat shuddering over their fire during the whole of that dreary day.

Night came on. Rosine, whose terrors were increased by her stronger sense of danger, walked restlessly up and down the room; but Armida, oppressed more by the burden of her heart than her situation, sat passively.

Starting, she called on Rosine to listen to the sound of a harp.

"What harp?" said Rosine; "I hear no harp."

"But I do," said Armida—"I hear the harp of the old bard. Is it an omen of fancy, or a real sound?"

They listened, and then heard it faintly but distinctly in a remote part of the building.

Both eagerly attempted to open the door, but it was secured: they called on the woman, but no one answered; and Armida, returning to her seat, resigned

herself to that delicious but mournful sensation which music excites when it revives the scenes in which we first heard it. Her heart was with Connal on the lone heath again—again she offered him the sacrifice of life, luxury, and fame, but the tear that wandered down her pale cheek was dried by the recollection for whom that sacrifice had been rejected.

At that moment the woman hastily entering, exclaimed—

"The captain is coming."

She retired before any inquiry could be made or answered, and Armida and Rosine hurried to the window with mingled curiosity and terror.

A severe frost had succeeded the snow of the preceding day: the surface of the ground was hard, dry, and glittering. They heard from a great distance the tramp of horses: the moon was bright, the troop approached, and several persons with lights appearing at the door to receive them, they distinguished a horse-

man of superior figure alighting first, to whom all the rest appeared to pay a kind of rude deference, but he was in a military uniform of green, and all their fears were re-increased, as they beheld his wild, martial figure, his commanding gestures, and the mute and savage submission which the party appeared to pay him.

The loud noise of their entrance echoing through the spacious building drowned every other sound, and Armida and Rosine had no heart to mention their terrors to each other; but before they could speak, the woman rushed in to announce the captain was approaching, and a light and rapid step followed her. They rose at his entrance. There were no lights in the room, and the dim fire did not reveal his figure; but they could distinguish his taking off his cap as he entered, and advancing with graceful dignity.

"Forgive this intrusion," said he, "it was caused by my wish to remove

your fears: dread nothing from us: we are unhappy men, whose feelings are at war with our situation; but desperate as it is, it cannot compel us to oppress those whom man is bound to protect and honour."

He was interrupted by a groan from Armida, who in the first sound of his voice had recognized the voice of Connal, and vainly attempting to suppress her emotion, sunk from her seat on the ground. Connal rushed forward to assist her: lights had been brought in, and he discovered that the female he was supporting was Armida.

The burst of agony with which he called on her name, the impassioned clasp with which he held her lifeless form one moment to his heart, the despair with which he relinquished her while he still continued to bend over her, amazed Rosine, and she said mentally—

"Is this the lover of Gabriella? Is it repentance or compassion?"

"Rosine," said Connal, recollecting himself, "are you here too? Forgive me, I did not see you: my eyes are sti dim, and aching with the snow." An as he turned away, his luxuriant hair i vain concealed the tear he wiped away- "I will not insult her by my presence, said he, mournfully retiring: "tell h I am gone to give orders for her sa conduct. While she remains, she sha be unseen by me, and when she depart the blessing that follows her steps sha be heard by heaven alone."

Armida recovered slowly. she look round, and saw he was gone

"Why did he go?" said she, faintl "does Gabriella forbid him the exercis of common humanity? Alas! if he cou bear the reproaches of this wasted figur he had no other to fear."

Rosine, attempting to console h mentioned the assurances of safety an liberation she had received from him.

"Yes," said Armida, "yes, I need

not be told that he can resign me without a sigh, though it will cost me life to resign him. Alas! what a difference does the heart feel between those cold and measured duties that the man of honour pays the helpless female, and that burning tribute—that gift of the free-grace of love, that like that of angels seems intuitive and involuntary."

An approaching step was heard, and Connal again entered. Armida hastily drew down her veil, as he approached with faltering steps.

"Forgive this second interruption," said he, in still more faltering accents: "I had forgot what I meant to say: Colonel Wandesford is safe, and at liberty. Your attendants too are here, and to-morrow shall accompany you wherever you wish to go. I need not add," he continued, while his dark cheek was tinged with crimson, "that even in this den of rapine all that belongs to you has been as sacred as in a sanctuary. My

own faithful men shall to-morrow attend you within a mile of the castle, or where you wish, at the risk of their lives."

"And is Wandesford safe?" cried Rosine, to whom the frightful image of his murder was still present; and even Armida uttered an expression of pleasure, for she felt that she was not deserted while Wandesford lived, and this gave her a degree of confidence that her forlorn situation seemed to demand.

The awful frown that was sometimes seen on Connal's brow gathered as he looked at her; his voice suddenly became firm, and he said:

"The honour due to the sex and rank of the wife of a general officer shall be paid strictly by the man who avows himself his mortal enemy, and who will never forget it, except when he has him in his power."

"His wife! did he say his wife!" cried Armida, starting from her seat as he proudly retired; "but what matters

it," she added, resuming her seat with dignity, "what matters it to the lover of Gabriella whether I am the wife of Wandesford or not?"

The woman now returned, and from the increased servility of her manner they easily comprehended that they were indebted to Connal for the change it had undergone.

Profuse and even elegant refreshments were spread before a cheerful fire, but Armida could not partake of them; and Rosine, who shuddered to think the purchase of them might have been some brave man's life, declined them too. The woman retired, after inquiring at what hour they wished to depart in the morning. Armida, after some ineffectual attempts to speak, motioned to Rosine to answer, and she, who felt from this appeal they could not quit this spot too soon, naming an early hour, the woman retired.

The presence of Connal seemed to act

on every inmate of this rude mansion; no loud voices, no hurried steps, no mutter of conspiracy, or burst of riot, announced the haunt of banditti; yet Armida and Rosine felt terror even in this strange calm, till weariness overpowering every other sensation, they threw themselves in their clothes on the humble bed, as the hoarse clock below striking one, was answered by the jarring sounds of bolts and locks strongly secured, and the solitary step of some individual, who appeared to be stationed as a sentinel in the hall.

END OF VOL. II.

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